THE FRIENDLY FOUR
AND OTHER STORIES
by
Ralph Connor

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THE FRIENDLY FOUR AND OTHER STORIES

RALPH CONNOR
(Charles W. Gordon, D.D., LL.D., F.R.C.S.)

By Ralph Connor

The Friendly Four and Other Stories
Treading the Winepress
The Gaspards of Pine Croft
To Him That Hath
The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land
The Prospector
The Man from Glengarry
Glengarry School Days
The Foreigner
The Doctor
Black Rock
The Sky Pilot
The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail
The Major
Corporal Cameron
The Recall of Love
The Dawn by Galilee
The Angel and the Star
Beyond the Marshes

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and Other Stories

By

RALPH CONNOR
(Rev. CHARLES W. GORDON, D.D., LL.D., F.R.C.S.)

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THE FRIENDLY FOUR AND OTHER STORIES
—B—

PREFACE

In the sketches that make up this book there is an attempt to supply the unwritten setting of some of the incidents in the life of Jesus in the hope of making Him more real by helping men to see Him, not as a dim, mystical, if not mythical figure, enshrined in the faith and love of His devotees, but as a true man in a truly human environment.

There is no duty so imperatively pressing upon the world to-day, none so fruitful of good as the duty of knowing Jesus, and this because in the knowing of Jesus one lays hands upon the key that unlocks life's mystery.

That Jesus is knowable in all the infinite reaches of His being can not be asserted. But that He is knowable to the extent to which He is necessary to the highest human self-realisation is an axiom of our faith.

The real obstacle in the way of knowing Jesus is of course that He is unique. The claim of the Incarnation makes Him so. But

here it is to be said that He has suffered many things at the hands of the school-men and theologians. Too often, they have given Him a personality that is mainly theological. His life story they have treated as illustrative material for the study of dogmatics. With the simple story of His life in their hands, in their anxiety to prove Him Very Man or Very God they have made Him something more than man, or something less than God, neither man nor God, an impossible being.

The beginning of all knowing of Jesus is found in the history of Him as a man. In the historic Jesus of Nazareth lies the clew, which held firmly and followed through all human thought and experience, will lead to the knowing of Him as a revealer at once of the ideal man and of the Infinite God, the One who in His person mediates God to Man, and through whom man comes into a life unity with God.

But here we come upon another obstacle in the way of knowing Jesus, in the inadequacy of the records of His life. There is no attempt by the authors of the Gospels to give a complete story of His life. These records are

rather personal recollections, fragmentary, almost incoherent at times, of the words and deeds of Jesus, and of the effects produced by them upon the people among whom He moved. These recollections are set down in words of naïve simplicity by honest men, untrained in the art of logical and consistent narrative. They wanted to preserve from the abyss of the vanishing years what they knew of Jesus, that so all men might come to believe in Him for their salvation.

The world will never cease to be grateful that these men adhered with simple fidelity to their task of telling the things about Jesus which they had seen with their own eyes, heard with their own ears, and experienced with their own hearts. They never seek to adorn the tale, they make no attempt to philosophise. With the artlessness of perfect art, and with a conscience toward truth as mere "*marturoi*" "witness bearers" they tell their story.

These tales of theirs, exquisite in their restrained and severe simplicity, however, are fragmentary, mere thumb-nail sketches. They leave so much untold, they raise so many questions, and leave them unanswered, that

they challenge the imagination of the reader to fill in the historical, the physical, the psychological, the spiritual environment of persons with whom they deal. We never know a man till we see him in action, till we observe the effect of his action upon his environment, and the reaction of his environment upon himself.

The records give us so little of this environment. In a few vivid words a wonderful work of mercy is flashed before us, and there it remains to a very large degree unrelated to its setting. A leper comes running and, kneeling to Him, makes his pitiful appeal. The Master stoops, touches, cleanses him and sends him off jubilant and vocal. The incident deeply moving, thrilling with compassionate love is given us in seven sentences. Our eyes follow that jubilant leper, we would fain halt him, question him. Whence came he? What was his human environment? Had he a home, a wife, friends? What was his spiritual history? Did the defilement of that dread disease penetrate to his soul? We feel that by knowing him better we should know more of Jesus.

Then, too, out of some trivial incident there leaps at us, without introduction or warning, a word, a saying, a teaching of the Master's in epigram or parable which leaves us perplexed. The meaning eludes us till we know something of the historical, social, mental, spiritual environment out of which it springs. It is so worth while to know Jesus that we almost claim the right to allow our imagination to linger, lovingly and reverently, around the environment of His deeds and words, trying to fill in the unwritten context of the story in the hope that perchance, by seeing Him moving among living men, and under purely human conditions, acting upon and reacting to His environment He may become to us flesh and blood, a truly human being, one of ourselves.

In this way we humbly hope that, perchance, we shall get a little truer impression of Him as a brother-man, walking along earth's dusty highways, living with common folk, working at their work, struggling with their problems, rejoicing in their joys, grieving with their sorrows, hoping, despairing, hating, loving, battered by life's cruelties, and

finally emerging triumphant, till our hearts glow within us, for that we know and feel that we have been companying with One truly man, the Man, Christ Jesus. For whatever else He be, if He be not first and truly brother-man to us He cannot do for us what He came to do, nor can He be to us what He came to be.

It may be objected, and quite reasonably, that the environment sketched being purely the result of imagination, may be remote from truth and therefore valueless. But a man cannot be blamed for seeing with the eyes which God has given him. Let other men use their own.

If these sketches help to rescue Jesus from the company of mythical personages, to free Him from the trappings of theologic theories, to bring Him nearer to us, to make Him more truly a man, one of ourselves, and yet unique among us in all His Divine beauty and perfection, and so make it easier for us to love Him as brother and friend, and worship and adore Him as Saviour and Lord, they will have served their purpose.

C. W. G.

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I

THE FRIENDLY FOUR

THE FRIENDLY FOUR

A SICK man has few friends. The wolf-pack falls fiercely upon the wounded. The savage Indians leave their sick and old to die. There is in man a certain cruelty born of self-ishness. One by one the friends of the sick man fall away from him. For the sight of sickness is distressing, the sick man is hard to do with, there are always for the strong and well work to do and pleasures to take, and the out-of-sight are soon forgotten.

Thus it fell that the young man in his North-ern Galilean home lay long hours on his couch listening to the feet of the passers-by upon the path beside his window. Listened with bitter thoughts. Once they had thronged him, in his gay days, when health and money and a gal-lant spirit made him a leader in wild doings. But since this paralysis had stricken him, and since his money was all spent on quack healers they had left him to drag out the long days and longer nights alone. Ah! only the man

long sick knows what loneliness is. God knows too. They had left him alone. No, not all, one remained, a very Jonathan, who when his sheep were folded, or in a friend's care, would come to shorten for him the desperate hours of night. A kindly gossip he was, bringing to the sick-room tales of the countryside. But often the sick man wearied of him and then would curse him from his sight. Yet he would return, for that was the kind of friend he was.

Ah! this is the kind of friend a sick man needs, one who will bear with quirks and whims. The kind of friend our sins and follies will not drive away, but who will ever return.

There fell on him a bitter weariness, and not of body only. His soul was the haunt of sorrow. Gaunt despairs watched him fall into troubled slumber when night fell and waited for his wakening in the morning. For hard as man was Jehovah was harder, his mother's awful God with his judgments merciless, unescapable. The sick man had no illusions about himself. He made no pretence to righteousness. He had been wild and wayward

and foolish. God's judgments were hard, remorselessly hard, and they were difficult to understand. He had sinned, but he had been no worse than others, not so bad as some. They had escaped without judgment. They were greatly esteemed now and prosperous. He could name a score of them, once bosom companions, reckless as himself, equally guilty of sin against God. They had all sinned together, he alone suffered. Through the long days and longer nights he vexed his soul with questionings, questionings that grieved his mother and terrified her, questionings for which his friend Jonathan, simple soul, had no answer, questionings which still haunt the souls of men sick with loneliness and sufferings, and weary to the point of death.

Steadily the boy grew weaker with the passing months, till his one prayer was that death might speedily come and bring relief. What lay beyond he knew not, and there were times in his desperation when he cared little. Furthermore, life had no hope, and death something less.

One night his friend Jonathan came breathless with running, voiceless with excitement:

"I have found," he cried when speech came back to him, "I have found a healer for you, David."

But David, whose day had been of unusual misery, could only consign him to Gehenna.

"A healer," cried Jonathan, disregarding his friend's cursing, "a wonderful Healer, Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth."

But David, who had made full experiment of healers to his cost, could only point him to the door in his rage. Long ago he had forbidden any one to speak to him of healers.

But Jonathan was not to be stilled. In the city, a day's journey away, he had seen the Healer at His work, had seen Him surrounded with sick and decrepit folk whom he touched into life and gladness. "He made a lame man walk," he shouted.

"So did my last healer," said David bitterly.

"He made a blind man see."

David turned his face to the wall.

"A blind man see?" said the mother.

"Yes! a man born blind! Truly! I asked Him myself!"

But David refused to listen to him and

drove him from the room with cursing born of bitter disappointment and despair.

But returning day after day Jonathan continued to proclaim his faith in the Healer. If David could only look into His face and hear His voice he would believe in Him.

"I shall never rest till we get to Him, David."

And so from day to day he told of the power of the new Healer, till David in his rage forbade him the house.

"Keep him out, the stubborn fool," he said to his mother, "till he is done with this folly."

But his mother could only groan, "Ah, if it might only be," hiding from him her foolish tears. Hope springs with difficulty in hearts trodden hard with adverse experience.

But with his sheep upon the hillside under the stars Jonathan pondered his problem and prayed that in some way the sick man might be brought into the presence of the Healer. But to his prayer no answer came till one night he made his great resolve. He himself with three men would carry his friend to the Healer. And now to find these three was his task.

It was the harvest time and all his friends

were overburdened with their toil. Besides it was difficult to interest them in a sick man. Further a multitude of engagements preoccupied their minds. "If they could only meet the Healer," said Jonathan to himself, "and see Him at His work with the sick folk and hear Him talk as He healed them, that would do it." He knew that then they would be scouring the country for the blind, the halt, the demon-ridden, for the sheer joy of seeing them made whole. One sight of His saving power would fill them with a passion for saving. But it was well-nigh impossible to get men immersed in their daily cares to listen to talk of the Healer, and Jonathan had but faltering lips. Men laughed at his speech. But find these bearers he would, no matter at what cost, at what humiliation he would find them.

After a night of prayer he went next morning, at break of day, to his nearest neighbour, Jacob, a former friend of the sick man. Jacob was a man of wealth. In his younger days he had been a spendthrift, a waster of wealth, but with the possession of wealth consequent upon his accession to his father's estate, he developed the power of making wealth and was

far on the way to become a miser. Jonathan found him among his vines, overwhelmed with their teeming harvest.

"Peace to you, Jacob," he said.

"And to you, Jonathan."

"You are early at work."

"And much need have I. Look at these vines."

"The Lord has greatly blessed you."

"But to what purpose if my grapes be allowed to rot on the ground. Strange times these when no man can be had to work in my vineyard. I am fairly overborne with my work. From dawn till dark am I toiling here."

Jonathan stood watching his busy hands, vainly seeking in his mind an avenue of approach. Finding none, he plunged headlong.

"Have you heard of the Healer? The wonderful Healer at Capernaum?"

"Healer? No healer do I want, the Lord be praised, but a grape harvester."

"A wonderful Healer has come to Capernaum! He heals all manner of diseases."

"Oh, tell me not of healers! Tell me of a vineyard man, and I shall listen."

"Jacob! He could heal David!"

"David?"

"Yes, David, our friend David. You once were his friend."

"David? Ah! yes, yes! But I am sore driven, look at these vines! I am distracted by reason of my falling grapes. Farewell! The Lord give you peace. I cannot stay to speak to you."

"I thought we might carry him to the Healer."

"Who might?"

"We—you and I and—"

"Are you mad? Do you not see these grapes? They will soon be past their prime. Depart in peace. Talk not to me of Healers and sick men. I am sick at heart myself."

"But David—"

"The Lord have mercy upon him! But what can I do for him?"

"Help me to carry—"

"Help you? Me? I need you rather to help me."

Jonathan stood silent. His slow mind could find no way to move this man from his vines. If Jacob could only have seen the Healer at

His wonderful work! He uttered aloud his thought.

"See Him? Now you go beyond all reason. Tell me! Can I leave these vines to see Healer or any other till after harvest?"

"Pray be not angry, Jacob. I am distressed for David and in a few days the Healer will have left Capernaum and his chance will be gone. I must get him to the Healer. I must find a way. If only you could see Him, and hear Him, Jacob, for He is a mighty Prophet, and with a strange and moving message on His lips."

Jacob stayed his hands. He was a true son of Israel for all his greed, with Israel's passionate yearning for the fulfilment of the ancient Promise burning deep in his heart. "A Prophet? A message? What mean you?"

"A Prophet indeed! I verily believe a man of God! A mighty Prophet! The people hang upon His words. Oh, Jacob, let me take your place among the vines and you go in to Capernaum and see Him do His mighty deeds and hear His wonderful words."

"You take my place here, Jonathan?" Jacob was thinking rapidly. A Prophet!

Mighty in deed and in word! Jacob was keenly curious to see Him. Besides Jonathan was a rare man at the grape harvesting. He might make something out of this. They struck a bargain. That day they should work together in the vineyard, and till the following mid-day, when Jacob should depart to see the healer, leaving Jonathan to complete the day's task.

The grey dawn of the third day found Jacob rattling at Jonathan's door.

"Make haste," he cried without salutation. "To-morrow He leaves Capernaum for a tour through the villages."

"Who? What mean you?" said Jonathan. Coming out hastily from his chamber, he found Jacob deeply stirred.

"Why did you not tell me He was a mighty Prophet? Why did you not tell me of His wonderful message?"

"I told you but—"

"Told me? You told me nothing of His message to Israel. Who can He be? Esaias come again? Nay, He is greater than Esaias. No man ever spoke like this man! Can it be that He is—? But no, no! It can hardly be!"

"And yet— What think you, Jacob?" asked Jonathan. "I dared not hope. Can He be—?"

"Who?" said Jacob in an awed voice.

"The Coming One?" Jonathan's voice fell almost to a whisper.

"But come, why stand here? The day is going," said Jacob, with abrupt impatience. "We must make haste!"

"Whither?"

"Whither? To David surely, what else?"

"But your vines?"

"My vines? Now God forgive you! Ay! I deserve that. But would you think of vines to-day? And the Healer going to leave Capernaum to-morrow. This day we must bring him to Him."

"You mean David?" said Jonathan joyously.

"What is the man thinking of? What other? Is He not a Healer? Why! I saw Him make a filthy leper clean as a new-born babe. As a new-born babe, Jonathan! Not a touch upon his skin! Not a scale or scab! Oh, Jonathan! It made my eyes run tears! Come, let us away! Let us leave these cursed

vines. I had well nigh lost my soul to them."

"You saw Him, Jacob? Ah! Jehovah be praised! I knew how it would be if you could only see Him. Brother, give me your hands. See my tears mingle with yours."

"But let us hasten, we have two others to get," cried Jacob, all aglow with his new passion.

"Two others? Ah, yes! We must get two more!"

"Yes, 'twere better. But if need be we can carry him ourselves."

Wondering, Jonathan looked at the man, for he was small of stature and wizened, but said no more.

Hastily they took the road together on the quest for two more men, talking as they went of the wonderful prophet Healer. When but a short distance from David's home they saw approaching a young man, handsome, richly dressed, obviously making his way home after a night of revelry.

"It is Absalom," growled Jacob. "A worthless waster."

"I have seen little of him these two years,"

replied Jonathan. "But he has a good heart. You remember—"

"Yes! I remember he would throw away his shekels in handfuls and make others do the same. I know him, and many a shekel has he had of me. Now, God be praised, he has fewer to throw away. He has been making a night of it. Let us hasten past him."

"Peace to you, Jonathan—and what? Who is this? Our little Jacob? Away from the vineyard? And in harvest time? What has come to pass?" cried the gay young gentleman.

"We are going to bring David to the Healer," said Jonathan, speaking hurriedly, unheeding Jacob's nudgings. "We are seeking two men to carry him with ourselves."

"And we have no time to idle here—unless —Absalom will join us—" Jacob's voice had a fine ironic edge.

"No! No! We would not ask Absalom." Jonathan's eyes ran over the young man's festal robe.

"Ah! Why not? David is his friend, or was when he had money to spend and health to spend it."

"David! I thought he was dead. Surely I heard that," said Absalom aghast.

"We hear what we wish to hear," said Jacob. "He has been ill these three years, and for the last year has held to his room."

"Holy Abraham! In his room a whole year?" muttered the young man.

"Yes, and suffering terribly night and day. He is nearly worn out with pain," said Jonathan simply.

"A whole year!" Absalom's eyes wandered over the hill toward the rising sun. "God of my fathers! A whole year! Spring and summer in a stinking hole. Has he not tried the physicians?"

"He has tried them all and is only the worse," said Jonathan.

"Let us haste, Jonathan," said Jacob, impatient at the delay.

"Wait! Why all the haste?" said Absalom.

"We are bringing him to the Healer in Capernaum," said Jonathan. "We want two more men."

"The Healer? I have heard of Him. A magic worker. A Holy man. A fanatic."

"Yes, a wonder worker and a Holy man," snapped Jacob, "but no fanatic nor magician."

"What, Jacob? Are you a disciple? Then surely He has already wrought a wonder? And would you leave your precious vines for a whole day?" cried Absalom, gaily bantering the little man.

"For a day? Yes! And for many days. I am bringing to the Healer a sick man, once your friend. Once you were gay enough with him. You haven't seen him for two years, you thought him dead—ha, ha, a way you gentlemen have." Jacob's sneer cut to the heart.

"I grieve for David. I deeply grieve for him— Two years! Truly I grieve for him." Absalom's tone was gravely earnest.

"Ah, you grieve for him, then! How much? You will doubtless join us in carrying your friend to the Healer?" said Jacob, the sneer still on his lip.

"Nay, Jacob, not Absalom," said Jonathan.

"No! No! Not Absalom! He is much too grand! His robe is too fine! His hands too soft! He would faint by the way! Bah! Why trifle?" said Jacob, angrily.

"Your Healer? How know you he can heal your—our friend?" enquired Absalom.

Then Jonathan poured forth in impas-

sioned words his tale of the works of the Healer.

"And He is a mighty Prophet, too! A mighty Prophet! A Prophet of Jehovah," burst forth Jacob in a sudden passion of enthusiasm. "He preaches freedom to the fettered, deliverance to the enslaved."

"Ha! Deliverance! Freedom! And healing power! Is He a leader of men, think you?"

"Leader of men? Nay! He is no fool revolutionary. I know your schemes. He is none of your sort," said Jacob, abruptly.

"I would fain see your Prophet, Jacob," said Absalom quietly.

"The dust would soil your festal robe, and—"

"My robe? Nonsense, Jacob. You speak like a fool," said Absalom, with a touch of anger.

"Your soft hands?" jeered Jacob.

Absalom laid his hand gently on Jacob's shoulder and closed his fingers.

"Let go!" cried Jacob, striving to tear himself loose. "Your fingers grip like a dog's

teeth. You have the strength if—" Jacob paused.

"If what?" said Absalom, smiling at him.

"Oh, come, Jonathan, let us be going! Do you expect this man to help us?" cried Jacob in a rush of passion.

Jonathan looked eagerly into Absalom's face.

"Are you fool enough to think he would be seen with us carrying a sick man through Capernaum's streets?" continued Jacob.

"No, no," said Jonathan hastily, "I would not ask him."

"What would his fine Capernaum friends say? Come, I shall wait no longer." Jacob was in a fine rage by this time.

"Where is your fourth?" said Absalom, quietly.

"Fourth?" echoed Jonathan faintly.

"Fourth?" said Jacob, aghast.

"You have no fourth?" said Absalom. "Then I shall have to find you one." He set off toward a large house opposite which they had been standing.

"What? He is going to Eleazer? The Banker?" said Jonathan.

"Eleazer? The Pharisee?" said Jacob. "He is worse even than—"

"Worse than I," replied Absalom, turning round toward them. "Yes! He is more exclusive. You see, he consorts not with sinners, unless he makes something by it, of course, as he will in this case. Wait for me!"

They waited for half an hour, and then saw issuing from the house the two men; Absalom talking with much enthusiastic gesticulation. Eleazer following with reluctant steps.

"He has actually got the old Pharisee," said Jacob, in a low voice.

"Well! here we are!" cried Absalom, in a jubilant voice. "We are off for a jaunt to Capernaum. Jonathan, you know my friend Eleazer? And you, Jacob? We are all off to see the new Prophet. Eleazer has heard much of him, though he says the Prophet derides The Law."

"No! Not derides! He sets aside The Law," said Eleazer, his lips hardening into a thin line.

Eleazer was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Once he had been a devotee of The Law, pursuing perfection by a meticulous and scrupu-

lous observance of its minutest regulations. But honest with himself, and disappointed of his high expectation of righteousness, he had given up his quest and, disillusioned, had sunk into mere formalism, devoting himself to the acquisition of wealth as a usurer, and succeeding. But in the heart of his hearts he found neither peace for himself nor hope for his nation. Yet, though he had failed of that perfect righteousness before The Law which had been his youth's ambition, he still stood passionately with his class for the majesty and authority of The Law. Hence he cherished a deep hostility toward the new Prophet of Nazareth because he had heard of His light treatment of The Law. "He sets Himself above The Law, forsooth," he said with scorn.

"Not so!" cried Jacob. "He upholds The Law! He demands a more rigid observance than do the Pharisees. I myself have heard Him say: 'Not one tittle of The Law shall pass till all be fulfilled!"

"Come! we can talk on the way. We shall pick up David as we go," said Absalom.

"David?" said Eleazer.

"He is ill," replied Absalom lightly, "but

the Prophet is also a Healer, and will make him well again. At least, so our friends here declare."

"It is true. Quite true." And once again Jonathan, as if he could never weary of the story, told his tale of the Healer and His works. And Jacob told of the Prophet's wondrous message of hope for Israel. The Pharisee listened with grave and wondering face. In his heart stirred again the vague hopes and yearnings of his youthful days.

Arrived at David's house, the party halted at the outer gate of the court.

"I fear he will not be ready," said Jonathan, moving toward the door.

"We will wait," said Absalom.

"And he may be unwilling to come," replied Jonathan. It was only the night before that the sick man had refused to be carried out of the house. He no longer distrusted the Healer's power. But he feared the journey. And most of all he dreaded the Prophet.

"He is a Holy man, you say, a man of God. He will spurn from Him one who has cursed God in his heart. He will not, He cannot turn aside from me, a sinner, the just judgments

of Jehovah. I cannot, I dare not face this Holy Prophet."

"He will turn no man away. He receives all who come," Jonathan declared. But the sick man still dreaded the ordeal of facing the Holy Prophet.

The thought of this made Jonathan hesitate at the door.

"Make haste," cried Jacob. "Why delay? The day is passing." And Jonathan went in. After some minutes he appeared at the door and beckoned to Absalom.

"Perhaps you can persuade him," he said. "He utterly refuses to go."

"For two years and more I have neglected him. How can I go to him to-day?"

"He needs you to-day more than ever. To-day is his only chance."

"I will go. He can only curse me," said Absalom, and together they entered.

Meanwhile the other two waited outside, Jacob, impatient at the delay, Eleazer entirely unaware of what was before him. Absalom's invitation to accompany him on a pleasant little jaunt to the city, where they could visit friends and incidentally see and hear the new

Prophet, he had quite gladly accepted. He feared to offend a powerful client. That they were to be accompanied by a sick man he had not bargained for. That would unpleasantly slow down their pace. That the sick man would need to be carried he suspected not at all. When upon the return of Absalom and Jonathan bearing the sick boy on his pallet this dawned upon his astonished mind, his indignation drove him into incoherent expletives.

"Do you mean that I should act as bearer to a paralytic? A stranger? Absurd! Insolent folly! Through Capernaum? Verily not!"

But Absalom merely laughed at him. "I shall be with you," he said. "They will not look at you."

Early in the day though it was, there were already some loitering neighbours, waiting about the sick man's door to see what was to do, and commenting freely upon the whole situation.

"What mean they? Carry the sick man out? The man is dying! How foolish! How cruel! He will die on the way!"

"And to a Healer? Truly one would think they had had enough of healers."

"The Nazarene Prophet? I have heard strange things about this Nazarene Prophet, and of the company He keeps. The lowest of the low, I hear." Till the haughty Pharisee was well nigh driven mad with their criticism.

The mother's lamentations added to the general distress. She would never see her son alive again. The heat would kill him! Yet what could she do? If he remained at home he would die anyway! There was a chance, but a desperate chance at best.

At length they set out, a strangely assorted company, animated by different motives but held together by a single bond. They had all become interested in the Healer, and all, even the two who had never seen Him, and had to depend solely upon the word of others, had come to believe in His healing power. Curiosity, too, had been aroused. Besides, the very word "Prophet" had still a strange power to stir the heart and kindle the imagination of every true son of Israel. Who could tell? Who could tell? At any rate, they were com-

mitted to the plan of putting their faith to the test.

On their journey, the heat of mid-day drove them to shelter for some hours, so that it was late afternoon when they arrived at the city gates. The Healer was easily found. The city was humming with the rumour of Him. But everywhere the disconcerting assurance met them that they would find it impossible to get near Him. Scores, hundreds of people, had tried to reach Him and had failed. Steadily, stubbornly, they held their way through the streets, which became ever more thronged as they neared the house where He was. At the gate of the courtyard the bearers were halted. A dense mass packed the courtyard. In the gateway stood a group of country people straining to catch every tone of the voice that like a silver bell floated out over the heads of the multitude.

"It is impossible to make entry!" said Jonathan, who, with Eleazer, was carrying in front.

"You might have foreseen this," grumbled Eleazer.

"Oh! Carry me out of this press! I shall be crushed to death!" the sick man wailed.

"Hush!" said a burly peasant in the gateway, turning angrily upon them. "I can't hear a word for your noise."

"Take me back home!" moaned the paralytic, faint with the heat, and filled with his own dread of the Prophet. "I don't want to see Him! Take me home, Jonathan! Let me die at home!"

"Here! Take my place, Jonathan!" commanded Absalom, moving to the front. The change was made. Absalom stood a moment or two surveying the crowd before him. "Make way," he said, tapping smartly on the shoulder the peasant blocking the gateway. "We wish to enter."

"Peace!" said the man, glaring at him.

Absalom's hand closed on his arm.

"Friend, make way! We have business with the Prophet."

The man swung about with a fierce exclamation, rubbing his arm, looked into the face of the young gentleman behind him, hesitated, then with a malediction drew aside making an entry possible.

"Make way, friends!" Absalom's clear voice startled the crowd. "We have business with the Prophet."

The people, observing the Pharisee and the young gentleman, standing side by side and making authoritative gestures, though much annoyed, gave back, and immediately the four bearers stood in the court in the midst of a crushing throng.

"Now what?" growled Eleazer, glancing about for some escape, while the crowd angrily hushed him to silence lest they should lose a single word floating out through the door.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand . . ."

"Wait! Listen!" said Absalom, straining forward to hear.

"There is space at least to rest on the roof," said Jacob. "We cannot longer abide here."

"Quick," cried Absalom to his friend the Pharisee. "You can take this end alone," and pushing brusquely through the crowd, which fell away from his impetuous thrust, he made toward the outer stairs. Over the heads of the people they lifted the pallet high and speedily found themselves resting on the roof of the house in which stood the Prophet.

Indistinctly from below floated up a word

now and then. A loose tile caught Jacob's eye.

"I should like to hear what He is saying," he muttered, lifting the tile aside.

"A shrewd idea," said Absalom, tearing at the tiles till he made an aperture in the roof.

"I am come not to destroy the Law but to fulfil . . ."

"Ah!" muttered Eleazer, placing his ear to the hole. "What says He?"

"Moses truly said, 'Thou shalt not kill,' but I say unto you whoso is angry with his brother without a cause is guilty of murder . . . God looketh upon the heart . . ."

"Why tarry here doing nothing?" impatiently exclaimed Jacob, ripping up the tiling.

"What are you doing?" said Jonathan, aghast. "You are destroying the man's roof."

"Better destroy the roof than that the boy should die. Look at him!"

"David!" cried Jonathan, in terror. "You are dying!"

"Take me—away!" whispered the sick boy. "I am afraid of that Holy Prophet. He reads —men's hearts. I dare not—look into His face."

"Come, Absalom! Let us enlarge this

hole!" cried Jacob. "The boy will die before our eyes."

"What mean you?"

"We must get him before the Healer. There is no other way. We shall drop him down through this roof. Make haste! Cheer up, David."

"Jacob, you are a man after my own heart," cried Absalom, delighted, and fell upon the tiling. In a very few minutes they had broken up the roof. Down upon the heads of the astonished people below fell the debris from the broken ceiling. Up rose their protesting cries.

"Heed them not," said Absalom, joyously.

"Now your girdles!" said Jacob, knotting his to one corner of the pallet. Backward crushed the amazed Pharisees, who were standing close to the Prophet, to make space for the pallet descending upon their heads from the broken roof above.

On every side rose angry murmurs from the outraged Pharisees at the unseemly and impudent intrusion of this wretched sick man into their sacred company. Why could he not have waited till a more convenient time? And those insolent bearers of his. Had they no re-

gard for property rights? No respect for authority? For high estate? Who were they thus to thrust themselves and their sick into the very midst of this most august company? But as their eyes turned to the Prophet to see what He would do, their voices sank into silence.

Upon the pallet at His feet lay the sick boy, his fearful eyes uplifted to the Prophet. His mind was no longer on his wretched shaking body, but on his sinful soul. First the Prophet's glance searched the faces peering down through the broken roof, then rested upon the pale, twitching face of the boy upon the pallet at His feet. A silence fell upon the multitude, while they two, the paralytic and the Prophet, in a world of their own creating within concentric circles of an ineffable fear and an infinite compassion, looked into each other's eyes. For one long moment they gazed at each other. Then through the pulseless stillness came the heart-thrilling words, words that through the generations have continued to thrill the hearts of sinful men.

"Courage! My boy! Thy sins are forgiven!"

"Forgiven?" gasped Eleazer. "God of Abraham! What is this?"

"Look!" cried Jonathan, his voice breaking in a sob, his finger pointing at David.

Into the pale face had come a rush of warm blood. In his eyes, holding the eyes gazing into his, dawned wonder, rapture, adoring love, while unheeded tears rolled down his cheeks.

Still gazing into the boy's eyes, the Prophet, with a single sentence, stilled the murmur of shocked horror at His blasphemous assumption of Divine prerogative, and to the boy again spoke: "Rise up! I bid you!"

First upon his elbow the boy got himself, then to his knees, then upon his feet and there stood in a maze of wonder and joy.

"Oh!" he said, in a low voice, "I can stand." He lifted his hands high above his head. "I am well! I am strong!" he gasped, as if struggling for air. All this time his eyes had held the face of the Prophet in a rapture of adoring love. Then down upon his knees he dropped and, clinging to the Prophet's feet, pressed kisses upon them, washing them with his tears.

"Roll up your bed," said the Prophet,

quietly. At once the boy obeyed, and stood waiting, his tears still flowing.

"Go to your home." For an instant he hesitated, then without a word lifted his roll and set off through the astonished crowd, which made way for him with loud acclamations of joy and of praise to God.

"He is gone!" said Jonathan. "Let us follow! He may faint by the way."

"Not he," cried Absalom. "He runs like an antelope. He will not stop till he reaches his home."

"I shall wait to hear this Prophet," said Eleazer.

"And I," echoed Jacob and Absalom. With them waited Jonathan.

Meantime through the long day till evening fell, the mother waited within her home, listening for the sound of the returning feet of those who had borne her son away in the morning. And as she waited listening, she reproached herself that she had ever allowed her boy to be carried from her sight. As for the Healer, her anxiety eroded the foundations of her faith in Him as the hours wore slowly on.

"I shall never see him again alive," she moaned. "They will bring his dead body back for burial." Thus deeply sunk in her woe, she heard not the light beat of swift running feet that came down the road and turned into the court. A shadow darkened the door. She looked up, saw a tall youth standing, heard a soft, rapturous cry, "Mother!" and found herself within strong arms that drew her close. Her boy was restored to her safe and sound.

When their raptures were somewhat subdued their talk flowed around the Prophet.

"What is He like, my son," asked the mother. "You never describe Him to me."

"I know not, Mother. He is like no one in all the world. I looked into His eyes and forgot all else. My dread vanished. You know how I feared Him because of my sins. He knew them, too. His eyes were searching the deepest corners of my heart, and yet I wanted Him to see everything, the very worst there. My one desire was that He should know me through and through. And He does, He does. And yet in spite of all, He said: 'My boy,' just like that, Mother, as if He had been you, 'My boy, your sins are forgiven.'

Oh, Mother, He made the world new to me. Think! all that dark cloud of horror and fear clean gone from the sky. And then to prove it He made my wretched body well. Oh, Mother, the Rabbi must have been wrong about the judgments of Jehovah. At any rate I am strong and happy, happy when I think of God."

"And yet the Rabbi is a learned and holy man."

"Yes, he knows the Law and the Prophets, but I don't believe he knows God. This Prophet claims to speak for God, so Jonathan says. And He loves to forgive sins. I know that. I could see it in His eyes."

"Without sacrifice?" faintly enquired the mother.

"That I do not know. He claims the power, the right to forgive sins."

"What manner of man is He?"

"A wonderful, good man, a kind man. He thought of you, Mother. I would have lingered to hear Him speak, but He said: 'Go home.' And then I thought of you, too. He made me think of you. I thought of all you had done and suffered for me, Mother. And

when He said go home, I saw you here waiting and so I ran. He makes men thoughtful of others, and kind like Himself. Oh, Mother, I must know Him better."

"I would love to kiss His feet," said the mother. "Would I could see Him."

It was far toward the dawn when the Friendly Four arrived, eager to assure themselves of the reality of the wonder that had been done before their eyes, and eager to explore the mystery of the power by which it had been wrought.

"Yes! he is here! See him standing before you!" cried the mother, as they entered, pointing to her son beside her, straight and strong. "Come in! And the God of Israel bless you!" So saying, she slipped out to tell to their neighbours the wonderful news, leaving the men to themselves.

"Praise be to Jehovah!" said Jonathan as he entered.

"Jehovah be praised!" echoed the other three, following him into the house.

Then to Eleazer went David with outstretched hands.

"You were a stranger, yet you helped to

save me," he said, in a breaking voice. "And you, Jacob! You left all your work for me! And Absalom, you were not ashamed to carry a wretched creature through the streets of the city!" To each in turn he gave his hands. But when he came to Jonathan he put his arm round his neck and kissed him.

"You saved me in spite of myself!" he sobbed.

"Nay, not I, but the Prophet," replied Jonathan, his arm around the boy's shoulders.

"Ay! Truly! The Prophet. Praise be to Jehovah! But you! Never should I have got to Him but for you!"

"What did He to you? What power is this that you have received from Him?" asked Eleazer.

"What He did, you can all see," replied the youth, stretching himself to his full height.

"He has given you back a perfect body," said Absalom, allowing his eyes to run over the young man's form.

"Yes, a new and wonderful power of body have I," replied David. "Never have I had such a full tide of life as I feel now in my body. It is beyond all words."

"But what did He to you?" asked Eleazer. "I could not rightly hear nor see. Did He lay hands upon you?"

"No. He only spoke a word. But what a word!" The boy's eyes were glowing. In awed silence the others waited for him.

"Did you hear His first word? About my sins?"

Again in silence they waited.

" 'Thy sins are forgiven,' He said before He healed me. Ah! He knew! He knew! When I looked into His eyes I forgot my wretched body. My sin was before me! My awful sin! He saw it too. He knew my dread and quick He helped me. He forgave me my sins."

"I heard that word," said Eleazer. "But how, without priest or sacrifice, or Temple rite can sins be forgiven? And besides, who but God can forgive sins? And yet He seems a Holy Prophet. This I cannot understand." The Pharisee was torn between his theological preconceptions and the emotions of wonder and love that flooded his heart.

"Your questions I cannot answer. But they trouble me not," said David simply. "One

thing I believe, that my sins are forgiven. *He that cleansed my body from disease pronounced my soul free from sin.*"

"But there is appointed a sacrifice for sin—" began Eleazer.

" 'Thou desirest not sacrifice. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,' " quoted Jonathan softly.

"True, but did not Moses command and appoint sacrifices for sin?" asserted Eleazer, and straightway proceeded to set forth in full and lucid detail the Mosaic ritual associated with the pardon of sin.

None could contradict him or combat his logic, and so they sat sorely puzzled till David again took up the word.

"Friend Eleazer," said David quietly, "your words sound wise and in full accord with Holy Scripture. But, though my brains are sorely puzzled, yet am I also clear in mind that He that healed me did pronounce my sins forgiven; and more, did claim the authority so to do, and further did prove, by His power to heal, that the authority to forgive was His. Speak I not truly?"

"Ay! Most truly do you speak," said Eleazer.

"And seemed not this Healer to be a Holy Prophet of God Most High?"

"And that He did most truly," replied Eleazer, earnestly. "His face, His eyes, His words proclaim Him so."

"And do I not stand here before you all healed of my most terrible disease?"

"Yes, David!" cried they all.

"And do you believe me that I feel new strength, new life, new joy in life flooding my body?"

"Yes, David, we do truly believe!" cried they all again.

"And will you not believe me when I tell you that when He spoke those gracious words: 'Thy sins are forgiven,' I knew at once they were forgiven, because a wondrous peace fell on my soul, and a sweet cleanness into my heart, and a new glad love for God, and that all this abides with me to this very hour. All my vile thoughts, my raging passions, my fierce rebellion, gone. All my fear removed. All my shame wiped away."

"Yes, David, this also we do believe," they

cried once more, their glad tears flowing freely with his.

"And shall I not still believe He spoke the truth, and shall I not continue to trust that He who healed me could forgive me any sins?"

"Yes, yes," they cried again.

"And love Him with my whole heart?"

"Yes, oh yes, David!" once more they cried.

"And may we not believe that when we know more of Him and of His message we shall better understand?"

"That would seem wise," said Eleazer, slowly.

"But oh, I would do something for Him!" cried David, in an ecstasy.

"What can we do?" cried Jonathan. "He takes no money. He needs no friends. He has all to give, but nothing He wants."

"He loves to heal sick people. I saw it in His eyes," said David, softly. "I have been thinking what joy it would bring Him to gather to Him all the sick in this countryside when He comes."

"Ay, truly! To my house!" said Jacob quickly.

"Mine is larger," said Absalom, "if He

would so honor the house of one like me," he added doubtfully.

"He ever comes where He is invited," said Jonathan, "to rich or poor, to high or low."

"I would fill the house with sick for Him," cried David.

"I, too, would help! And I! And I!" said all eagerly.

"And with sinners too!" said David in a low voice.

But no man made answer, each busy with his own heart.

"He loves to forgive sins," urged David, gently. "I saw that in His face."

But still none answered till some moments had passed. Then Jacob said:

"He said to-day: 'Lay not up treasures upon earth,' and I have given my soul for gain."

"And He also said: 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees ye cannot enter the Kingdom,' " said Eleazer.

"He said, too: 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' " said Absalom.

"But He also said to me to-day: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' " said David, his eyes once more running tears. "My sins! My dark sins!"

"Mine, think you?" said Jacob. "I love wealth!"

"And my foul sins?" said Absalom, with swift passion. "I have sounded the depths."

"My heart is proud and hard," said Eleazer, smiting his breast.

"But mine worst of all," said David, "and yet to me He said: 'Thy sins are forgiven!' Why? Because He loves to forgive sins. Therefore would I bring sinners to Him."

That night they made a pact between themselves that upon His return they would have ready for Him the sick and the sinful of that countryside.

And so it came to pass, as it is written:

"And He came into the land Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment and

as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

* * * * * * *

For nineteen hundred years and more this Prophet-Healer, invisible, has haunted the ways of men, and countless millions of the sick and sin-burdened have found new life and peace, for they have heard His word of healing and of forgiveness. From that experience they have gone to their place of duty strong to bear burdens, radiant with a joy the world cannot chill, serene with a peace that sin cannot disturb, triumphant with a hope death itself cannot daunt.

But still there are in lonely places those who because of various ills cannot make their way to Him as He passes by, and so must abide with their sickness and their sin upon them in their misery and despair.

Oh, Christ, Healer and Saviour of men, are there none of Thy healed and Thy forgiven here among us who might find some way by which these helpless might be brought within sound and sight of Thee, and be made whole in body and in soul?

Oh, Blessed Jesus, wilt Thou not penetrate

our hearts with the memory of Thy compassionate love of us that we, with like compassion and love, may bring these forgotten and helpless to Thee.

Oh, Jesus Christ, wilt Thou not so live in us, the members of The Body in every land, that we may love with Thy love, and pity with Thy pity, and do Thy deeds in saving those who without Thee must lie in misery, helpless, hopeless and unforgiven.

Send forth Thy men, oh, Christ, that all that are diseased may be brought unto Thee, touch Thee and be made perfectly whole.

II

THE OUTCASTS—GOD AND MAN

THE OUTCASTS—GOD AND MAN

"A LEPER came to Him beseeching Him on bended knee, saying, 'If you only choose, you can cleanse me,' so He stretched His hand out in pity and touched him saying, 'I do choose, be cleansed.'"

It was a daring thing to do, the deed of a desperate man. Smashing regulations and conventions, outraging public opinion, risking the rage, the furious rage of a horrified mob, this leprous man came dashing through the crowd and flung himself in the dust at the feet of Jesus, with his cry of mingled faith and fear.

This story is one of those thumb-nail sketches of the incidents in the life of Jesus which stimulate the imagination and kindle a yearning for further detail. How much is left untold about this leprous man! Once he had his place in human society, with all its varied human interests. He had his work to call forth his energies, to offer scope for his ambitions. He lived in a home, with all the tender

loves of a home. Wife and children perchance were his.

To him there came a day, a day of dread and horror, a day never to be erased from memory. It was the day when rising from his bed and baring his arm he first saw that dreadful thing. Think how it stabbed him to the heart. He made light of it, looked again, and yet again, the terrible fear shaking his very soul. He covered it up and went about his day's work, saying nothing to his wife. But throughout the day in the pauses of work the thought of the horrid thing would stab him anew. In his conversations with his friends his tongue would falter, his mind would be on that cursed spot. For a week he doctored it with ointments and unguents, hiding it fearfully from every eye but his own, watching it now with hope, now with horror. Before God he agonised over it, searching his life for sin that might have brought this sore judgment upon him, beseeching God's mercy with bitter but unavailing penitence.

At length "the white hairs through the angry rising" drove him to the priest. The priest was his friend, but he was a man who

stood for truth, and for the cleanness demanded by the Law. One glance at the spot and in the priest's face stood his doom. Ah! God of Abraham, have pity! He was a leper! A thing unclean! Henceforth separate from his fellows he must abide condemned to the unspeakable horror of a life beyond the gate. Never could he enter his home, never touch wife or child. This cursed thing that somehow had gotten into his blood would drive him forth from all things clean, from all kindly fellowship, forth to the loathsome company of the leper colony outside. An outcast! An outcast forever he must be! For him the future had no hope. Out there apart from all who loved him and whom he loved he must live his living death, till rotting away joint by joint, he should fall into a leper's grave. His wife and child might come and set down for him his daily portion of food in some appointed place, but ever must they flee his approach. They must henceforth greet him only from afar. *Outcast* from all human kind, he must for ever remain.

Thus banished from all things clean, condemned to daily contact with rotting bodies

and disintegrating souls, there grew in him a sense of physical and moral defilement that filled him with self-loathing and numb despair, his sole longing that the day might soon come when death should free him from his doom.

But to him thus cursed came another day, a day when there first crept into his despair a grey dawning ray of hope. It was the day when his little one cried him a strange message. She had seen the new Prophet. He had spoken to her. "He took me in His arms and would not let the men drive me away. He has kind eyes and a kind voice, and He makes all the sick people well."

The father listened with sick despair. The lame, the blind could make their way to Him without fear. But lepers!

"The sick crowd about Him," continued his little one, "and touch His feet, His robe. I saw a man touch even the tassel of His girdle and at once he was healed." But father and child alike knew that for the unclean and cursed leper no touch was possible. Did he dare approach he would be stoned from that holy presence.

Yet somehow into his heart there crept a

desperate hope. But mingled with the hope was a fear all too surely grounded, a fear not of the populace but of the Prophet Himself. This Prophet had a mighty power; of that there could be no doubt. "If you only choose, you can cleanse me." The doubt was as to His willingness. And why this doubt? The Prophet was a holy man, and holy men as he had known them were not always pitiful men. Rather were they frequently stern enough, their very holiness manifesting itself in the severity of their judgments against sin.

Besides, every one knew that this horrible disease was a judgment of Jehovah attaching to specially heinous sins, blasphemy, covenant breaking, impiety and the like. Would any Prophet of Jehovah dare to reverse the judgment of Jehovah and deliver the sinner from his just doom? Would this Prophet dare break through the age-long customs of the nation? Would He, nay, could He, ignore the rigid ritual of Moses and the Law that dealt with the leper? Limit to His power there was none, but as to His will to save, ah! that was a matter of doubt.

A day and a night he spent upon this ques-

tion, till the issue grew clear. On the one hand there was a choice of the contemptuous refusal of help by the Prophet and consequent stoning by the populace, on the other hand the certain horror of this long-drawn living death. This Prophet, however, had a reputation for pitifulness, and also for a certain daring in his disregard of regulations and conventions.

A day came when events determined for him action. Forth from the village came one evening the Prophet with the attendant crowd. He was on His way to the near-by hill, where, with His chosen band of followers, He would spend the night in prayer. At the foot of that very hill was the leper's cave. Eagerly the leper at the cave's mouth watched the Prophet approach, watched Him pass by. Suddenly came the thought, "This is my chance." Without further parley with himself, a quick rush, before which the startled multitude scattered like leaves before a tempest, and the poor unhappy leper was in the dust at the Prophet's feet, uttering his cry of doubt and faith.

Then came the marvellous thing. Swift came the leper's plea. "If you only choose, you can cleanse me." But swifter the re-

sponse. "I do choose, be cleansed." And with the word—oh, wonder of all wonders!—came the touch of the Healer's hand upon that defiled and defiling body.

A wonderful thing this. Every deed of power with Jesus was a preaching as well, every wonderful work proclaimed His new gospel. In this word and act of healing we have an epitome of the whole gospel, for here we have a revealing of the very heart of God, a showing forth of Divine love going out in an act of pity, the Divine love expressing itself in a will to save.

This was indeed a new thing in God, or at least a clearer shining out of what had often been shadowed or limited in Jehovah. In the tradition of this people the power of Jehovah was wont to be manifested in creative acts of majesty.

"Ascribe ye strength unto God; His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds."

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork."

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens

made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap."

Even in the acts of His providence over His people His power manifested itself in righteous judgments.

"By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation."

Great as was His mercy toward His righteous people, upon the wicked His terrible vengeance was sure to fall.

"How terrible art Thou in Thy works! through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee."

Historically His saving power had been shown in mighty acts of national deliverance.

"Come and see the works of God; He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land."

In this work of healing, however, this mighty power of God was showing itself in a will to save the unrighteous, unhampered by

regulation, unlimited in scope of application. Here, the Divine love, reckless of convention and transcending all limitation went forth to the unclean, the unworthy, the sinful. This mighty exercise of power proclaimed a will to save without hindrance, without limit.

We are not to think of the "mighty works of Jesus" as a mere pose. True it is that every wonderful work proclaimed the new gospel. But it is also true that the things He did revealed His own heart of compassionate love, and thus revealed for that age and for all time, the heart of the God whom it was His mission to show forth to man. The presence of the sick, the blind, the lame challenged the love and the power of Jesus. These disabilities He regarded as an outrage upon the Divine plan. That man should be so disfigured and debased was not according to the original purpose of God. The fact of physical debility or defilement was an effect of the presence of sin in human nature. The mission of Jesus was not to deal with effects only, but primarily with causes. He healed men's diseases because of the infinite pity in His heart, but every healing of disease was a

demonstration of His will and of His power to deal savingly with sin.

So when He cleansed this leper it was from sheer love and pity of the outcast man, but not only of this outcast was He thinking but of all those unhappy souls who by reason of sin are outcast from God and from all things clean and good. Hence His command to His disciples, when He sent them forth on His mission to the lost of Israel, set forth a two-fold ministry: "Heal the sick, and as ye go preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' "

The teaching of this Divine act of saving has an appropriate significance for the Church of this day. It is true that the Church that represents Christ among men has never formally accepted defeat in regard to any race, or class, or individual of mankind. It is still the faith of the Church that "He is able to save to the uttermost." But in the face of this creedal fact there is that other terrible and challenging fact that surrounding the Christian nations of the world there are the overwhelming masses of those nations who know not God nor His power and willingness to

save. And the tragedy of the modern church is that this seems to be tacitly accepted as the normal condition under which she should live and work. More than that, within every Christian nation there are vast numbers surrounding the Christian Church, pressing hard upon her with their sorrows and their sins, masses of people uncleansed and unhealed, as if Christ had never passed through their land, and as if the Church that represents Him, and holds for the world His saving power, had no existence at all. That acceptance, that contented acceptance by the Church of this appalling and heart-breaking condition of things constitutes the supreme tragedy of the Christian Church of our day.

Jesus could not endure the presence of an uncleansed leper: His Church bears with equanimity the presence of an uncleansed multitude. The cry of the blind man arrested Jesus in His course, He could not proceed on His way; the Church to-day lives undisturbed by the lamentable moaning of that surging sea of sin and sorrow by which she is surrounded. Jesus recognised nothing in human life or circumstance as a stay to His saving

power; the Church to-day, not formally but practically, has thrown up her hands in the presence of certain ills and woes of humanity as being inevitable and beyond her power to help. "Be thou cleansed," said Jesus, and the man was cleansed. Ah! if His Church to-day, holding that same infinite power, would but say to the world that encircles it, "Be thou clean," what a world this would be, and how Heaven's high arches would ring with joy. This wonderful act of cleansing, is, as has been said, an epitome of the gospel.

But a deeper wonder is in this mighty work, setting forth a truth which the Church is in danger of forgetting, and which it cannot forget without loss of power. Often the saving power of this Prophet-Healer was manifested in a word. "Come out of him," He said and the frenzied man in the synagogue was at peace. "Rise up, lift your bed and go home," He ordered, and the lad went off hale and strong to his mother. "Stretch forth your hand," was His word to the man with the withered hand, and the hand was restored. But here He does not merely speak, he puts forth His hand and touches the leper. The touch

of Jesus carries a purpose and holds a meaning of its own. No one of all that multitude would dare touch the leper. Not his dearest could touch him. Let a man dare to touch that defiled body, and the touch would have rendered him outcast with the outcast leper. Touching the unclean classified with the unclean. The man who consorts with lepers must accept the leper's fortune and fate. *By His touch of the outcast Jesus becomes Himself outcast.*

There are those who would discard as archaic and indeed immoral the doctrine of Divine atonement, and indeed certain theories of atonement are both archaic and immoral. This is not the place for discussion of that potent and majestic truth. And it would be unfair to press unduly the significance of that touch upon the outcast leper. Yet one may confidently affirm that it was no meaningless act of Jesus. Full well He knew that by public opinion, He Himself became *outcast* with the leper.

Yet deliberately He touched. And with a twofold purpose. First, that all men might see and know that love recognises no barriers,

no limits in its exercises of saving power. The Saviour of men is a Saviour to the uttermost. Again let us say, for it is one of God's wonders, that no barrier is so high that it can stay the onrush of saving love, no soul is so far outcast but can be reclaimed.

But again, and very specially again, the Saviour touched that men might see and know that at all cost soever the will to save must find full and unrestrained exercise. The cost to the Saviour of the sinner's saving only the Saviour Himself can estimate. This cost is not the suffering demanded for sin, but in the oneness with the sinner which saving love effects. The Saving God will not allow sin with all its consequences to keep Him from oneness with the sinner. "He became outcast for us." It is the outcast God who alone can save the outcast man. That is the wonder and mystery of the Cross. There love goes out beyond all limit in its determination to save. This is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus which makes men free from the law of sin and death. This is not all there is in the Cross, but this, praise God, is all in the Cross.

That evening the leper with his clean body, free from defilement and death, and his new spirit, free from degradation and despair, radiant with joy, overflowing with gratitude, raced through the town and far beyond, shouting the praises of Him who had wrought this wonder in him.

We may perhaps forgive him that his uncontrolled exuberance of gratitude to Him who had saved him, made it impossible for the Healer to continue His work for a time in that town. How could he help it? See him running toward his home, pausing at times dead still in his tracks to tear open his clothing and look at his beautiful clean body, and to shout, "Clean! Clean!" instead of the old terrifying and pathetic leper cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" Can we wonder if to a crowd drawn to him by his ecstasy he kept crying joyously, tearfully, "Jesus did it! Jesus did it!"

"What did He, madman?" ask the passers-by.

"Madman? Ay, with joy! I am the leper!"

"Leper? You are no leper!"

"No! But this morning I rose a leper! Now see my hands! My face! This body!

Oh, God be praised! Let me go! Jesus did it!"

And thus he came home to wife and child, and to all the dear and clean things in human life. What a salvation in this that Jesus brings!

And thus He still makes men clean in heart, strong for work, and sends them back to their place among men, to home, and to all the pure and good from whom sin isolates and separates, sends them back to tell their story, to sing His praise who made them clean.

III

THE MAKING OF HARVESTERS

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I. Introductory

(1) *The World is God's Harvest Field.* He is the Lord of the Harvest. He it was who prepared the ground, sowed the seed, with dews and rains watered it, with genial suns made it warm, and over it breathed the life-giving airs of heaven. It was in His heart to make the seed grow and ripen and bring forth fruit a hundredfold, and then to garner it every grain into His storehouse. This Purpose of His is writ large in everything by which we may read His mind and heart, in His book of nature, in His book of human history, in His book of the heart of man. From before the foundation of the world down through the ages this Purpose has marched, thwarted, delayed, subject to vicissitudes of environment, but ever steadily moving forward to that supreme consummation when "in the fulness of the ages all things in heaven and earth alike shall be gathered up into one in Christ.

(2) *Mankind is His Harvest.* His mind sweeps the confines of the race. All peoples, kindreds, tribes and tongues are in His Purpose and His Plan. To all men His heart goes out in yearning, over all He broods in tender solicitude and in them all and through them all His Purpose will be accomplished.

(3) *The Church of Christ is His organised staff of Harvesters.* What part other orders of being may play in this great enterprise we do not know, but to the Church of Jesus Christ has been given the privilege, and upon it laid the responsibility for the garnering of the Harvest. Any delay in the harvesting, any failure must be laid at the door of those upon whom He has laid the responsibility and to whom He has given His commands. The garnering of the Harvest is the reason for the continued existence of the Church of Christ. To accomplish this Purpose it is that He has endowed the Church with His own infinite power and grace.

(4) *That the Harvest is not being garnered is the commonplace of world history.* All the tragedies of human life, of sin and misery, of sorrow and strife, of disfigurement and ruin

testify to the sad, the unutterably sad fact that God's Harvest is being wasted in the Field.

(5) *That it is possible to garner the Harvest is an axiom of the Christian faith.* The Harvest waves ripe in the field, the grain is sound and good, the harvesting power is sufficient, the harvesting equipment effective. All that is necessary for the garnering of the Harvest is available. Much of the ripened grain has already been gathered safe into the barn, in spite of untoward environment, in spite of disappointment and loss, it is still the faith of the Church that the Harvest might be garnered.

(6) *The reason for the failure is that the Harvest Labourers are few.* The Master of the Harvest has been over the ground, has laid out the work, has furnished the power and the equipment. There is no failure on His part at least. The Lord of the Harvest is ready, willing, eager too for the work of harvesting to go on apace.

Hence the supreme problem for the Church is *how church members can be transformed into Harvesters.*

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In the mind of Christ every man is a potential Christian, every Christian is a potential Christ, every Christ is a Saviour. The Church, therefore, is potentially an organised band of Harvesters. Hence were the potentialities of the Christian Church actualised, were its members transformed into Harvesters, the whole harvest would be garnered in one great, glorious and triumphant Harvest Home. The whole energy, therefore, of the Christian Church physical, intellectual, and spiritual should be concentrated upon that single problem, How can a Christian be transformed into a Harvester? In the story that follows is the answer set forth, so simple, so reasonable, so complete, that it is the mystery of the history of the Christian Church that it has been missed. And this is how the transformation is accomplished.

1. *They go on tour with the Master Harvester.*

After weeks of preliminary fellowship and training they go into the Harvest field. They watch Him at His work, they observe His method with the multitudes of sick, broken,

outcast folk who throng His steps, they catch His spirit, they feel the warmth of His compassion, the tenderness of His love. They listen to His Gospel, His words of comfort and hope spoken to the simple, unlettered, forgotten poor of Israel. They listen to the discussions He carries on with critics, with enquirers, with open sinners. They note His driving energy, His wisdom, His patience, His goodness, His self-forgetfulness. They walk with Him, they eat with Him, sleep with Him. They go out at night to the hills and watch with Him at His prayers, till they themselves fall asleep and leaving Him alone still praying, and as they thus company with Him two great passions are born in them:

(a) A passionate love for the Master Harvester.

(b) A passionate interest in the Harvest.

2. *They take orders from the Master Harvester.*

They as a rule have been ready to obey, but not always without question. But their fellowship with Him in His work establishes a new relationship, so now they obey without

question His commands, and attempt things they think they can neither understand nor do. For instance:

(a) *They go to the Lord of the Harvest with a plea for Harvesters.*

They might well have protested that if His prayers avail not, theirs will be futile, that no labourers can do His harvesting, that after all the Harvest is coming along quite well. But they don't. They go away and spend the night in prayer. They pray for labourers because their Master is spent and done, and because the Harvest is being lost. And as they pray they begin to feel like Harvesters, to be conscious of a deepening interest in the Harvest, and of an anxiety for its safe garnering.

(b) *They go themselves into the Harvest field at His command.*

They make no plea of ignorance, of lack of skill, of deficient power. They go into the field and begin to work. They go there without demur or protest, all their love for the Master Harvester, all their trust in His wisdom and His power, all their interest in the Harvest in its safe garnering born of their experience with Him in the field, all urging them, compel-

ling them to simple complete and glad obedience.

Thus the disciples through daily association with the Master Harvester in the field, by nightly fellowship with Him in prayer, and by yielding themselves to His direction in service are transformed into Harvesters and the garnering of the grain goes on.

The Story

The Master and His disciple band were together in conference at the close of a long day of hard work. They had just completed a tour of the towns and villages of Northern Galilee with their teeming thousands. Every day as they walked from village to village the crowds that thronged them grew with ever-increasing numbers, and every day as the Master toiled among the sick, the diseased and the demon-driven folk, delivering them from their varied ills, the enthusiasm of the people rose with growing intensity. In the pauses of His ministry of mercy with the sick and diseased and demon-ridden He gave forth in sermon, in parable, and in ordinary conversation His new Gospel of the Kingdom. So crowded were the

days with deeds of mercy, and with His Gospel preaching that He and His little company of disciples had hardly time to eat or sleep. Now at the close of the tour, and at the close of an exhausting day of preaching and healing, the Master summoned the disciple band to Him.

"I am done," He said, "my strength is spent, and behold the harvest still ungarnered." From the hillside on which they stood could be seen half a hundred crowded villages and towns.

"And small wonder it is, Master, that you are wearied and spent," answered the ready tongued Peter, "for these eight weeks now you have been toiling in the midst of the multitude, and hour by hour the sick, the blind, the lame and those possessed of demons have been draining virtue from you."

"Yes," cried James. "These days have been breathless days, but great days for Israel, wonderful days."

"The Master is weary," said John, "and should rest."

"Rest? How rest with the harvest fully ripe?" said the Master.

"The harvest?" exclaimed the beloved disciple. "Ripe? Surely it is! But, Master, you must have time to eat and sleep. I beseech you come now where we can prepare something for you, and where, after you have eaten you may rest."

"But the harvest!" said the Master, waving His hand toward the villages. "There it lies, waiting to be reaped! Who will reap it?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Simon the Zealot, "a glorious harvest it is. Truly the time of reaping is at hand."

"Ay," cried his friend Judas Iscariot. "Truly the day of triumph is at hand. Look at those villages! And every village full of those who have been healed of their diseases, or delivered from demons, all eager to acclaim our Master as King, and to follow Him to victory. Truly the day of Jehovah is at hand!"

"Yes, the day of Jehovah, the day of vengeance," replied the Zealot, his voice thrilling with passion, "the day of vengeance has come when His enemies will lick the dust. The time is at hand!"

"These have been truly great days," said Peter, "and the day of the Lord cannot be long

delayed. Think, Master! How the multitude thronged your steps, think of their hosannas! How wonderful and how glorious have these weeks been!"

"They are eager for action," said Judas, "eager for the Kingdom long promised."

"They would rise to-morrow against the Roman tyrant," echoed the Zealot. "Only two days ago in Bethsaida a man came to Him demanding that they be given an opportunity to strike a blow for freedom."

" 'Jehovah shall go forth as a mighty man,' " quoted Matthew, " 'He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; He shall cry, He shall shout aloud, He shall do mightily against His enemies. Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.' "

The Master's eyes turned sadly from one to the other. Is this all they have learned of the Kingdom which He has been proclaiming these past weeks? Do they think that it is for such a Kingdom He is spending His strength? His heart sinks in weary disappointment.

"The Master's strength is spent," said John, whose eyes had been anxiously studying that wearied and worn face. "Will you not come,

Master, and eat? Will you not come and rest?"

"But the harvest! The fields are white to harvest," said the Master.

"Oh, Master," said John, "think of the glorious work that has filled all these days. Think of the hundreds and thousands of blind and sick folk that you have healed, think of the multitudes to whom you have been proclaiming your message of love and hope. Is not this enough for the present?"

"Ay! And the demons!" said Peter. "Think of the multitudes of these poor creatures who have been delivered from the power of these foul spirits."

"The Master cannot continue this work very long," said Thomas. "Something must be done to secure rest for Him. Let us find some quiet place to which we can retire for a time and afterward the work can be taken up again."

"Retire! Behold where the harvest waves!" said the Master. The grief, the despair in His voice drew their hearts toward Him. "Listen to me, my children," He said. Then He began to recall to their minds the scenes of the last

weeks on their journey through the teeming villages and towns. He pictured the unhappy, wretched outcasts by the gate of every village and town which they approached, the crowds of the blind feeling their way after Him, the sick, and lame, and diseased led and carried toward Him, along the streets and lanes of the towns and villages, along all the country roads and byways, He reminded them of the eager multitudes intent upon His word. And ever at the close of the day, those still unhealed and unhelped who had to go sadly away. "And think of the other villages! Only a very few have we touched, and there they lie, and at their gates the lepers, and in their streets the poor, and everywhere the people needing help, and I am done, my strength is spent. Some help must be found, for the harvest is great and the labourers are few. Can you tell me," He asked, searching their faces, "of any help that we might find?"

There was no answer to His appeal. Silent, amazed, overwhelmed by the signs of grief and anxiety in His face, at the passionate yearning that reached their hearts through the tones of His voice. Distressed they were because of

His distress. Amazed that in His mind should be anything but a sense of triumph, of victory, of achievement, for truly to them the experiences of the past weeks had been one splendid succession of mighty works by this Master of theirs, such as never had been done in the history of their nation. Amazed and perplexed they were that in the place of triumph and glad satisfaction they should find in Him grief, unsatisfied yearning, anxiety, almost despair.

"Can you suggest no help?" he asked, his eyes going from face to face. "Then go! Pray the Lord of the harvest that He thrust forth labourers to garner this harvest. Pray to Him whose harvest it is, whose heart is in this harvesting. Pray to Him who has all power."

As He finished His appeal He turned from them, and motioning John and others of the band, who would have followed, to remain behind, He made His way slowly and painfully to the top of the hill.

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They stood watching Him until the shadows of the trees hid Him from their sight.

"And He has had nothing to eat," said James. "He cannot bear this strain long."

"He asked us to pray," said John, "and it is to pray that He has gone, and the whole night He will spend in prayer."

"Pray?" said Judas. "But if His prayers avail not what can our prayers do?"

"But He said pray!" replied Thomas, the loyal hearted. "How to pray or what to pray for I hardly know, but pray I must, and pray I will, for that is His word to us."

"What to pray for we know," said Peter. "Did you not hear Him say: 'Pray the Lord of the Harvest that He would thrust forth labourers to garner in this harvest.' We are to pray for labourers, for leaders, for great men of God, prophets perhaps who might help Him in His work."

"Ah! Had we a few great captains," said the Zealot, "who could organise and drill these multitudes into an army. What they need is generalship, we should soon sweep forward to victory."

"Yes!" cried Judas. "Generals we want, soldiers we want, but more we want statesmen. We want the great leaders of our own nation,

the priests, the members of the Sanhedrin, the princes of the people. If these can be enrolled under Him then the whole nation would rise and endowed by His mighty power would shake Israel free from the tyrant Rome."

But John shook his head sadly. "I know not just what He means, but sure I am that He means not what you speak of. Not by one single word or act has He suggested a war of revolution. Have you ever heard Him speak of armies, or mighty men? His thoughts are ever with the Kingdom of God."

"The Kingdom of God," burst forth the Zealot, "and is not this the Kingdom of God, that Israel should rise in her might and drive forth the enemies that have tyrannised over her, and bring in the glorious day when all nations shall bow before Jehovah?"

"But to-night," said the practical Matthew, "He asks us to pray for labourers for this harvest." He swept his hand toward the villages, where twinkling lights were to be seen through the deepening shadows of the night. "Labourers to aid in that work which we have seen Him doing these last weeks. That is what He wants. Generals we may need and statesmen

later, but to-night He asks us to pray for labourers for this work."

Matthew's reputation among them for common sense, for vast knowledge in the history and tradition of Israel, and for wise judgment and practical ability brought the discussion to an end, and turned their minds away from the dreams and visions of the rising within the nation of a new and mighty world power.

"Matthew has the word," said John quietly. "We must obey our Master, the burden on His heart is more than He can bear. He has asked us to pray that Jehovah might send helpers forth to aid Him in this work of gathering in the harvest which lies about us here in these villages and towns of Galilee. Let us therefore go to our prayers!"

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The disciple band led by this suggestion broke into small groups of twos and threes, who sought for those quiet places under shady trees, or in the rocky caves of the hillside where they might fulfil the desire of their Master and make their prayer to God.

The brothers Peter and Andrew made one group; the two sons of Zebedee another;

Judas, forceful, passionately patriotic, found a congenial comrade in Simon the Zealot; Philip and Nathanael, friends of long standing, like in temper and in spirit, found their own place; while Thomas, doubting, pessimistic but loyal-hearted and courageous found in the practical, strong, stedfast Matthew the friend he needed.

Here and there upon the hillside they disposed themselves for the night, giving themselves over to fulfil as best they might the behest of their Master.

The last to move from the place of conference were Thomas and Matthew.

"Can you pray?" inquired Thomas, gazing anxiously into the countenance of his friend.

"I confess," replied Matthew sadly, "that during these past years I have been somewhat unused to prayer. I was, or thought I was too busy to pray, and yet—"

"Yet, we must pray," exclaimed Thomas, "that is His command. But how to pray or what to pray for I know not. What means He by 'Labourers for the harvest'?"

"That is plain, there lies the harvest!" answered Matthew, sweeping his hand toward

the villages whose lights could be seen in the plain below. "These people, the poor, the sick, the outcast, that is the harvest, Galilee is the harvest field, that harvest He has on His heart, it is the burden upon His soul."

"Labourers?" said Thomas. "What sort of labourers can He mean? I think not with Judas and Simon of generals and statesmen. Who can do this work like Himself? Who has the wisdom, the power? Who can be found so untiring in zeal?"

"He has the zeal of the ancient prophets," Matthew broke in.

"The ancient prophets!" exclaimed Thomas. "Not one of them carried in his heart the passion for the people that He has. And so full of tenderness is He. You remember, Matthew, that little blind child who had lost its mother, wandering through the crowd, alone and crying. With what tenderness He took the little thing in His arms, opened its eyes, called for the mother, found her, gave her back her child. That I can never forget."

"Yes," replied Matthew, "and the lepers at the gate of Gabera, those poor forsaken creatures counted accursed of God by all the

righteous. You remember how the people fled from them."

"Yes, and we all fled too," cried Thomas. "I like not lepers. I dread defilement!"

"But He stood there," said Matthew, "and as they fell down at His feet, do you remember how He stooped and touched every one of them, and how they rose clean and strong."

"And that terrible man possessed of demons," replied Thomas. "What 'Labourers' could be found that could deal with such a case as that? The demons would destroy any man but Himself."

To this Matthew agreed, but still resolutely held to his position that prayer must be made for labourers for this very work.

"And then," continued Thomas, "what about His preaching? Who is there that could preach His Gospel? Who knows His message but Himself?"

"Truly, it is a marvellous Gospel," said Matthew, "marvellous in this chiefly that it is not for the righteous but for sinners, for the outcast of Israel, for the God-forsaken, for those accursed from the Law. That is my daily wonder, Thomas. He makes friends

with the outcast, He freely invites them to Him, He loves to have them draw near. Think of that, Thomas! Ah, but that you cannot understand, I was once a publican, and I know what it is to be outcast from Israel, and Israel's Covenant and Israel's Hope."

By this time they had reached a little nook in a corner of some projecting rocks.

"We might tarry here," said Thomas. "And, Matthew, will you begin to pray? You know better what to ask for."

"No, Thomas, I would have you begin. My tongue is unskilled in prayer. I could say all the prayers that the rabbis teach, for these I learned as a child from my mother, but these ask not for labourers. But besides that I am not worthy."

"Worthy!" exclaimed Thomas. "You, Matthew! The strongest, soundest most stedfast man among us!"

"No, not worthy," repeated Matthew. "For years I turned my back upon the God of Israel. I loved wealth and for it sold my religion, my God. Thomas, I am not worthy to name that Holy Name aloud to-night."

"But, Matthew, how can you speak thus?

Has not the Master called you to be His disciple?"

"Oh, yes! Truly! He called me," said Matthew. "That is something too wonderful for me. He came to me, found me a publican, deep in my evil schemes, called me to go to Him. Never can I think of that day, Thomas, without finding my heart fill up with love for Him and wonder at Him."

Thomas stood gazing in speechless amazement at his friend, whose face was wet with tears. That this strong, stedfast, wise-hearted man to whom the whole band gave their deepest respect and esteem should thus uncover his heart and reveal these welling tides of feeling he could not understand.

"When He stood beside my booth that day," continued Matthew, "looked into my eyes and said, 'Matthew, come, follow Me,' everything in all the world suddenly became small to me, I thought only of Him. Before I knew I was out on the street, I could have kissed the dust of His feet that day. I could die for Him today."

"Matthew," said Thomas, "you must pray."

"Oh, were it to Him," replied Matthew in

an ecstasy of adoring gratitude, "were it to Him, I could pray to Him. He is as God to me. He would not turn me away. But I am afraid to pray."

"But you remember how even He has His burden. He spends long hours in prayer," said Thomas. "And how often has He said to us: 'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock, the door will be opened. Ask, as little children ask of a father.' "

"Yes," said Matthew, "that is His word, and that is like Him. I think I could learn to pray if He should teach me. But, Thomas, to-night we must find some way to pray, to ask for labourers for this harvest, to ask for helpers for Him in this work. But how to go to Jehovah without sacrifice or offering I know not."

"Ah," cried Thomas, "there I know you are wrong! He does not mean the prayers of the synagogue, the prayers of the rabbis, he is not thinking of religion at all. He is thinking only of these people."

" 'Thy mercy, Jehovah, is in the heavens!' " quoted Matthew. "It is Jehovah's harvest as well as our Master's."

"Yes, it is surely Jehovah's harvest," said

Thomas, "and it surely must lie hard upon the heart of the Lord of the Harvest as upon our Master's, that any of it should remain unreaped. And as I think of all that sad and unhappy multitude I think I understand His longing for more labourers. I think of many of those unhappy demon-possessed men, I would there were labourers to carry them release. Ah!" continued Thomas, "there is one I would to God could be released!"

Matthew turned upon him a questioning look.

"Yes," replied Thomas in a low broken voice, "my own brother is one, in our village he lives a shame and grief to my father and to the whole family, and so has been for years. I would we could send him help. I could pray for labourers for the demonized."

"And I," cried Matthew, "could pray for labourers for those outcast and sinful ones. The men of my own class, cut off from Israel's Covenant, Israel's Hope, Israel's God, by their own sins it is true, but all the sadder for that. And none of them know that they may freely return, none of them have heard of this new and glorious thing that our Master proclaims, the

new Kingdom of God. Ah! I truly believe I could pray the Lord of the Harvest to send messengers to them. Would to God, some one might be sent to my old friends and comrades. Would to God I were worthy to go myself, I could tell them at least what He has done for me."

"Matthew," exclaimed Thomas, "are you not praying now? Will you not kneel and put in words to the Lord God of Israel, whose harvest this is, what you have said to me?"

"Would that be a prayer, think you?" asked Matthew doubtfully.

"Truly, it would be a prayer," answered Thomas. "Does it not express the deepest desire of your soul?"

"I think," said Matthew, with his face turned upward to the stars, "I think perhaps I can make that prayer."

Together they knelt to pray.

Matthew was the first to begin. Before he uttered a word of the prayer he had been bidden to make he began with himself. With tears of penitence he uttered to Jehovah his cry for pardon.

"Oh, Lord God of Israel have mercy upon

me! Have mercy upon me! Mine iniquities have gone over mine head as a sore burden. They are too heavy for me. I acknowledge my transgressions, my sin is ever before me. But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me." And so his prayer rose for pardon, for healing of heart, for renewing of spirit, Thomas the while listening in amazement, almost in fear.

As Matthew continued to pour forth the burden of his heart, his soul appeared to gain strength, courage came to him and hope, "With the Lord there is mercy," he cried, "and plenteous redemption."

Then he took up his appeal for the harvest labourers, pleading with passionate earnestness for his own comrades of former days, the men with whom he had sinned, with whom he had shared the contempt and hatred of the multitude. For them he prayed that messengers might be found to carry to them the Gospel of pardon and of hope.

At this point in his prayer he appeared to re-

member his Master, and ere he was aware he was telling the Lord of the Harvest of the burden upon his Master's heart, of his Master's sore need of help. As Thomas listened beside him his wonder grew, and his heart slowly began to take fire, so that when Matthew was finished his prayer Thomas took up the word and carried it forward.

His first cry was for help for the Master in His weariness and despair. He besought the Lord of the Harvest to send labourers, lest the load upon his Master's heart should prove greater than He could bear. Then his mind turned toward the harvest field and his cry rose for the poor, and the sick and the diseased that thronged these villages and towns about them. For some moments his voice fell into silence, and then seeming to take the Lord of the Harvest into intimate confidence he dared to mention by name his own brother, and all like him possessed by demons, beseeching the Lord of the Harvest for some helpers who could carry the word of release and restoration to these unhappy souls.

And as they prayed the vision of the harvest seemed to grow ever more clear, the teeming

multitudes of sick folk, of diseased and broken men, the lepers in their lonely outcast state, the demonized souls abiding in rocky caves and tombs, or more horrible still filling their homes with misery and dread, all these they saw with new eyes of pity. They saw too, in the eager, perplexed faces of those listening to the Gospel proclaimed by the Master, the dawning wonder, the timid surprise, the hope, the fear, and with longing hitherto unknown to them they sought help for them.

Thus they spent the hours in prayer together, sending up to the Lord of the Harvest, at times with sobs and cries, their petitions, sometimes for themselves, often for the poor, the sick and outcast of their people, making their Master's burden their own, but always returning in their prayer to His own need of aid to bear the burden that seemed to be wearing down His strength and breaking His heart.

Then when the first grey light of dawn appeared over the hills beyond Jordan they laid themselves down and slept, to gather strength for the new day.

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With face serene the Master met His dis-

ciple band, the weariness of the night before was gone, His disciples had all been praying, the answer was sure, labourers for the harvest would be forthcoming, and the harvest would be safely gathered in. On the faces of the disciple band rested a cloud of anxiety, doubt, perplexity. "Yes, they had been praying," was their answer to His questioning but they seemed to have little hope of response. Judas, however, and his friend Simon the Zealot, made confident answer that they knew of labourers who could be secured, who might give valuable assistance in the work of bringing in the Kingdom of God. Scores of loyal patriots, yes, hundreds they knew who were ready at a signal from the Master to adventure all for the furtherance of this great enterprise. From the others of the disciple band, however, no hope of labourers for the harvest was offered. One after another, indeed, confessed that their prayers had been faulty in one respect or another, and all agreed that they could not conceive of any kind of labourers who would be sufficient for this work of harvesting.

"Who but yourself, Master, could open the eyes of the blind?" said Peter.

"Or cleanse the lepers, or give strength to palsied limbs?" chorused the others.

"Who would attempt to drive forth demons from the possessed?" asked Thomas.

"And who could be found in all Israel to know and proclaim with authority this new Gospel of the Kingdom?" inquired Matthew.

The Master surveyed the dismayed and perplexed group before Him. Then in tones of quiet authority He spoke:

"You have prayed the Lord of the Harvest for labourers?"

"We have," was the unanimous reply.

"You know of none to be found in Israel?"

"We are sure, Master," replied one, "that none could be found who is able to do the work that you are doing."

"Then," said the Master, "since none others are available, go you into the harvest field."

Aghast they gazed at Him too astonished to make reply.

"Ye are the light of the world," He continued, "ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are to be witnesses of me, ye are to be my fellow-labourers. Go ye, therefore, to these lost sheep

of the house of Israel, tell them the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Still they stood, motionless, speechless, too astonished even to make protest or reply.

"Heal the sick," He continued, "raise the dead."

"Master, Master," cried Thomas in dismay. "How can such a man as I raise the dead?"

The words of Thomas seemed to release the powers of speech in all. With one voice they protested their inability for the task laid upon them.

"Come!" said the Master, "let us go aside for a little time."

Up the hillside He led them, and there apart from the crowds He spent the day instructing them as to the work which He was laying upon them, and to which He was sending them forth. He delimited the area of their mission, detailed their personal equipment, set forth their plan of operation, their method of work, their attitude and bearing toward the people they should meet. He did not hide from them that dangers, bodily sufferings awaited them at the hands of their enemies, and that even from friends, yes, from their own flesh and

blood, hatred, persecution and rejection should be their lot. What they had seen their Master suffer they must expect to suffer. But they were never to weaken, they must never show a sign of fear, they were ever to remember that the Heavenly Father had them in His care, and that no evil could befall them. Men might even kill their bodies, but their souls none could harm. At all costs they were to be loyal to Him, they must be true to His teaching, to His claims. Denial of Him would bring ultimate and eternal disaster.

As He spake of the difficulties and dangers before them, no sign of fear touched their faces. Their heads went up, their shoulders straightened, in their eyes gleamed His own courage. Dangers, difficulties, death itself had no terror for them, that was not their dread. No fear of what man could do frighted them, a deeper fear shook their confidence. Again Thomas spoke what was in the mind of all.

"Master," he cried, "do you ask me to cast out demons?"

"That is what I bid you do."

"But, Master," replied Thomas, "I have seen men possessed of demons, yes, in my own

home, and such a man no power could hold, no bonds or fetters could bind. What power then could I have," he continued, holding forth weak and trembling hands, "against these dread powers of ill?"

"None, Thomas, none," said the Master, "but all power in Heaven and in earth is given to me. Against that power, think you, can any demon prevail?"

"Against that power?" replied Thomas. "No, Master, no, no!"

"That power I now give to you," said their Master.

"To me? That power? To me!" Thomas' voice sank to a whisper.

Into the faces of the listening company came a look of awe, of wonder, of dawning courage. That power they knew to be invincible. Had they not often seen it at work, and with never a failure? Their Master, with this promise and pledge had opened to their eyes vistas of undreamed splendour, with this power at their command unimagined achievements were possible. Their hearts began to burn within them at the prospect.

Before He let them go the Master spoke one

last word, a word prophetic of world conquest, of timeless glory. His eyes now were resting, not on the teeming villages of Galilee, but on the nations of the world. His mind was occupied, not with harvest fields like those before their eyes, but with harvest fields that stretched, rich and glorious to earth's utmost bounds. He was thinking, not of the reaping of to-day, but of the reaping that should go on through all the golden harvest days of time, till the Lord of the Harvest should see the last precious sheaf safely gathered in. With that vision and that promise glowing in their hearts He sent them forth two by two into their own harvest field.

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The various groups made their own choice of fields of labour. Philip with his friend Nathanael chose the North country about his own city, Bethsaida; in the same direction went Andrew and his brother Simon Peter. Judas with Simon the Zealot chose the southeastern part of Galilee by the river Jordan for their field of service; while Thomas and Matthew choosing the southern part of Galilee, bordering upon the confines of Samaria, found them-

selves in the first part of their journey in company with them.

There was little conversation between the four as they journeyed. The profound impression of the Master's last words to them still lay upon their spirits, so for the most part in silence they went along their way. In the early afternoon an event occurred which tested to the limit, the temper of their courage. As they neared a village perched upon a rocky rim of the Jordan valley, suddenly from one of the empty tombs in the hillside rushed forth a naked man, raging, foaming at the mouth, shrieking, evidently demon-possessed. With a wild cry the wretched creature came running toward them. At this horrible and terrifying sight the little company halted and huddled together in startled confusion, Thomas shrinking close to Matthew's side. Judas in the forefront of the group boldly stood his ground, and in a loud voice of authority cried out: "In the name of my Master, Jesus of Nazareth, I command you, foul demon, come out of the man and enter no more into him."

A wild shriek, a paroxysm of fury and the man fell at their feet and lay as one dead.

But Judas took him by the hand. "In the name of Jesus," he said in a firm, clear voice, "rise up and stand upon your feet."

Immediately the man rose and stood, quiet, sane, steady, in full command of his physical and mental powers.

At this the little group of disciples broke out into exclamations of praise to Jehovah, and to their Master, Jesus. The man learning of the power which had wrought his deliverance joined with them in loud praise to Jehovah and to Jesus, His Holy Prophet, and besought them that he might be allowed to join their company and follow with them in their work.

But Judas would not have it so. "Go home to your friends," he said, "tell them that by the power of Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, you have been healed, and that he is bringing to Israel the Kingdom of Heaven, and bid them be ready to accept Him as King."

Loudly shouting the praise of the Prophet the restored man followed by Judas and Simon the Zealot entered the village.

* * * * * * *

There Thomas and Matthew parted company from them, took their own way toward

southern Galilee, their hearts profoundly stirred at what they had seen.

"I confess," exclaimed Thomas, "I was terrified at the first sight of that demoniac. Alone I should have fled from him."

"No," replied Matthew, "we should not have fled from him. But what I should have said or done I can hardly say."

"Sure am I," said Thomas, "that not a word would have come to my tongue. A brave man is Judas, and a strong man. Oh! Matthew, I greatly fear I shall never have courage to face a man possessed of demons."

"But remember," said Matthew, "we must not allow our fears to overcome us. Remember the Master said that we should fear no man."

"Ah, yes! Truly! He said that," cried Thomas sadly, "and as He spoke of the power which He was bestowing upon us I felt strong and able for any demon. But now, alas! my fear has possessed me again. These foul demons no man can overpower."

Stoutly Matthew maintained to his friend that the power bestowed on him by Jesus would be found sufficient for him, even against

demons, when the moment of trial would come.

In eager discussion they went on their journey until as evening fell they entered a small town on the southern border of Galilee.

No sooner had they entered the village than they observed a mob of angry men and boys in pursuit of a richly dressed man of middle age, running for his life, at whom they were hurling curses and casting clods and stones. The hunted man finally took refuge in a house of considerable importance, standing near the entrance to the village.

Matthew, after listening to the execrations of the mob, exclaimed: "Ah, it is the old game, one I know well. They are hunting this unhappy publican. Oh, yes, I know what you would say, Thomas, 'Doubtless he has deserved their rage,' but he is in a sad plight, and my heart is sore for him. Let us enter and see him!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Thomas. "He would resent our intrusion."

"He is a friend of mine," replied Matthew quietly.

"A friend of yours! I did not know you had a friend in this town."

"Nor did I till this moment. But this man is my friend. I, too, was a publican!"

Together they stood outside the courtyard of the house watching the mob. Behind the mob, apart, but evidently approving, stood a group of Pharisees.

"They do not make it easy for the publican to return to his faith," said Matthew.

Thomas made no reply. Truth to tell he had but slight sympathy for publicans. Deep in the heart of every loyal Jew was a bitter hatred for the man who took service with the hated tyrant, and made use of his office for the oppression of his own people.

"There are times when they long to return," said Matthew, answering his friend's silence. "But I wish I could find entrance."

Almost as if in answer to his request the tramp of disciplined feet was heard, and from a narrow side street, a company of Roman soldiers wheeled into the little area before them. A cry of warning and the mob scurried in all directions to cover, leaving only the children standing in curious, fearless groups, waiting for what might happen. Immediately Mat-

thew sought entrance to the house, Thomas waiting for him on the street. After long knocking and parleying he obtained grudging admission and disappeared within the house.

Many minutes passed before he came forth and called Thomas within. They found the publican a man of wealth and shrewd ability, well-versed in his nation's sacred literature, but at the present moment engaged in execrating his foes.

Matthew waited until his rage had somewhat exhausted itself, then said quietly, "There is no need for your imprecations, brother."

"What?" cried the publican.

"The judgments of Jehovah shall surely find them," answered Matthew. " 'His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.' "

"Such is not my experience," said the publican bitterly. "I saw them to-day, these righteous ones, urging on the rabble in their wickedness. Thieves they are themselves, these Pharisees, for all their prayers, and

robbers. So am I, but I use not prayers to cover up my crimes."

"I know well your miseries," said Matthew. "I know all that you have lost. I know how hard is your lot, and how bitter life has become to you."

Again the publican exclaimed, "What mean you?"

"I, too, am a publican, or was," said Matthew. "For love of wealth I, too, sold all that made life worth living. I, too, have known hate, contempt, slander and worst of all I deserved all that I received. And I, too, for that wealth, upon which my heart was set, lost friends, race, religion, hope, God, and with these my own self-respect, my peace of conscience."

"How do you mean?" exclaimed the publican in wide-eyed astonishment.

"I was a robber, a thief and a liar. Alas! such is the experience of every successful publican."

The publican rose from his chair in indignant rage, but Matthew, motioning him to his seat, went steadily on.

"I made vast wealth, I filled my home with

all that wealth could buy, but I was poor in soul, and I grew wretched. For what can atone for the loss of friends, kindred, country, God? My brother," said Matthew, his deep voice vibrant with sympathy, "from my soul I grieve with you. Your people hate you but not so much as you hate yourself."

The publican gazed at him in silent amazement; his anger slowly died out of his face as the sins of his heart, of his life, were uncovered to his gaze.

"But now," said Matthew, "all that evil past is gone and for ever from me. I have got back all that I have lost, no, a hundredfold more and with all, a new joy in life, a new God."

The publican eyed him narrowly, uncertain as to what manner of man had thus come in upon him. Was he one of those rabid zealots filled with fantastic and half-crazed religious ecstasy, that were frequently to be found in Israel in that day?

Matthew caught the look. "Nay, I am not mad, my brother, but may I tell you how all this has come?"

"Yes," replied the publican. "I am curious to hear, but after we have eaten."

In response to a message by a servant his wife entered, a shadowy, subdued little woman, in whose face sorrow had made its home. After the meal was served Matthew renewed his talk, while in growing surprise Thomas listened to his friend as he told their host his life story. With the simple eloquence of a soul brimming with deep and tender feeling, Matthew told of how the Prophet of Nazareth came to him, called him, made life new to him. Long into the night and far on toward the morning the talk went on, for the publican, touched by the magic of spiritual kinship, found that he must unburden his soul of its bitterness, its disappointment, its hopelessness.

"And what seek you here in this town?" inquired the publican, when Matthew had finished his tale.

"We seek to tell abroad the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, which our Master has given us to carry abroad through the villages of Galilee, His own ministry of mercy."

"And you will abide in this town for some days?"

"Yes, for some days," said Matthew.

"Then, if it please you, and if it will not hinder your mission, will you make my house your home?"

"Truly, that is the command of our Master. We are not to go from house to house, we are to bring peace to any home we enter, and there we are commanded to abide till our work is done."

The early morning found Thomas and Matthew walking in the little garden at the back of the publican's house, among the olive trees, planning the work of the day. As they walked and talked a little maid of six years ran out from the door. A beautiful child she was, with that golden hair so rarely found among her people, and lustrous blue eyes.

Thomas had a heart for children. "Come here, little maid," he cried, holding out his hands to her.

The little maid paused, turned an eager listening face in his direction, but made no movement toward him.

"Come," said Thomas, still holding out his hands, "show me the flowers of your garden."

The little one came slowly down the walk, but made no motion to take his hand.

"See," he said, "what flowers are these at your feet?"

The little maid stooped, passed her hand, as if in a caress over the flowers. "These are my lilies," she said, "my own lilies."

"And those over there?" said Thomas, pointing to some violets hiding behind a shrub.

The little maid stood up. "I cannot see them," she said, still looking at Thomas.

"Look there, my child!"

Still she kept her eyes upon his face. "I cannot see the flowers," she said again.

"Look where my finger points, you see my finger."

"No," she said, "I can see nothing—nothing at all—anywhere—" She waved her little hands, sweeping the big world about her as if indicating the magnitude of her loss. An indescribable pathos touched her voice and shadowed her face.

"God of Abraham pity you!" cried Thomas, putting his arm round her and gazing into the wide-open blue eyes, which gazed back into his, unseeing.

"Blind?" said Matthew below his breath.

"Blind!" replied Thomas. "And all her life

to go in the dark! Oh! would to God the Master were here!"

"Ruth!" called the mother's voice from the door.

"Here, Mother!" the child's voice was like a bird's call.

From the door the little woman came hurrying. Thomas understood now the lines of sadness in her face.

"Ruth, why do you run away?" said the mother, the impatience of anxiety in her voice.

"He called me and I came," said the little maid, smiling up at Thomas who still held her hand.

"Yes, I called her. I love children," said Thomas to the mother. "How long—how long has this been upon her?"

The mother's voice had more than sadness in it, a look fierce and rebellious flashed into her eyes.

"Surely it was not her sin," she cried, "nor was it her father's nor mine, our lives have been clean before Jehovah." Her voice was low and vibrant with bitterness.

"No, not her sin, nor yours," said Thomas quickly. "But for the glory of God."

"The glory of God?" echoed the woman in scorn.

"Oh! if only the Master were here!" said Thomas in a low voice to his friend. "If only the Master were here!"

The woman turned to him with eager face, "I heard you speak of Him last night," she said, turning to Matthew. "You said He opened the eyes of the blind." Her words came in breathless haste, "Oh, sir! tell me, could He? would He have pity on us for our little one?"

"What is it, Rachel?" Her husband stood in the doorway looking out upon the group. "What is it?" he said, walking toward them.

"We were speaking of the little maid," said Thomas, "our hearts are grieved for her."

The father's face grew dark. "All that could be done, all that wealth could do we have done. We must accept our fate."

"Thomas," said Matthew, speaking in a quick and hurried voice, "do you remember it was but yesterday that our Master gave you power—'All power in Heaven and earth'? Those were His words, His very words."

Thomas started up, looking at his friend with face that had grown pale. "Yes," he said

in a low tone, "He said all power." His eyes began to gleam with deep light. "He said all power, He gave it to me," he said, musing a short space. An intent far-seeing look came into his eyes, his lips began to move, his face grew strangely calm.

"We must never deny Him," said Matthew.

"No, at all costs," replied his friend, "we must not deny Him. Besides it would be a shame to deny Him."

Then suddenly kneeling by the child he drew her to him.

"Little maid," he said in a voice deep with restrained power, "in the name of my Master, Jesus of Nazareth, I bid you see."

A stillness as of death fell upon the little group. As Thomas spoke the child started back as if struck a sudden blow in the face, her hands flung high.

"Ruth!" Her mother's voice in a low poignant cry broke the stillness.

The little maid turned at the cry, ran to her, passed her fingers over her mother's face. "Oh, Mother!" she cried, rapture in her voice, "It is you, it is you!" She ran to her father, passed her hands over his face, "Oh! What is

this? Do I see? Is this seeing, Mother? Tell me!"

Into her arms the mother took the trembling child. "Do you indeed see my face? Do you see me, Ruth? Do you see my eyes?"

The little one put her fingers over her mother's eyes. "Are these your eyes, Mother? Yes! I know these are your eyes. Oh, Mother, how? Who did it?"

The mother pointed toward Thomas.

"You?" cried the little maid.

"No! It was Jesus, my Master," said Thomas, falling on his knees. "Jesus the great Prophet. Let us adore Him!"

On that day it was that salvation came to the publican's house. The old life with its ugly, greedy, cruel worldliness passed away. The work of a publican became impossible to him. The wealth that had cost him so heavily was quickly spent in righting the evils done in its accumulation. A simpler, poorer, harder life was theirs, but in their hearts there dwelt continuously joy, love and gratitude, a new hope that never faded, a great peace, an abiding content.

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That day there began also for Matthew and Thomas a new life. They entered into possession of a marvellous power, the power promised by their Master, the power to bring to the poor, the sick, the outcast the help, the healing, the restoration which it was their Master's joy to bring.

As they went from village to village spreading their new Gospel and doing their new works of mercy, this sense of power grew in them and with it grew their confidence and their joy. Difficulties, trials, persecutions, they experienced, but these had no power to weaken their faith or cloud their joy. It was ever Matthew who led the way, who fronted the dangers. Thomas was filled with a special dread and horror of the demonized. His early experiences in his own home had left their mark upon his very soul. Too often had he as a boy witnessed the terrifying struggles of those who sought, and often vainly, to bring under control his own brother. In his mind, however, was the stedfast purpose that his brother should be delivered from his possession and brought to sanity and wholeness of mind, but it was his hope that upon his friend Matthew

would fall the responsibility for this gracious deed. Demons had no terror for that stedfast soul.

The way to his home village led round a jutting hill wherein were caves which the village people had turned into tombs for their dead. As they were making their way about the hill a man, tall, emaciated, with rags for clothing, crept out of a cave and stood gazing far across the valley. Pale he was and shaking as after a fever.

"It is Joseph, my brother," said Thomas in a loud voice to his friend. The man heard him come running, faced about and made as if to flee.

"Joseph," cried Thomas, "do you not know me? It is Thomas, your brother."

"Thomas, my brother?" the man muttered vacantly.

"Yes! Your brother," cried Thomas in a pitiful voice. "Oh, how pale and weak you are!"

"Thomas, my brother!" said the man, recognition slowly coming to him. "Is it you, Thomas? You have—been long—away." The words came with difficulty.

"Oh, Joseph, what have they been doing to you?" cried his brother, in indignant grief.

The man's hands and arms were scarred and full of sores, his ankles torn and bruised with fetters, across his body were angry welts as if from scourging.

"What have they been doing to you?" said Thomas again, tears running down his face.

His brother held up his arms. "Look at them, they have tried to bind me down, but ha! ha! we are too powerful for them." A dangerous light gleamed in his eyes.

"Come, Joseph," said Thomas, "let us go home!"

"Home! Home! No, not home!" The wretched creature began to tremble, his voice rose in a dog's howl.

Thomas put his arm quietly about his shoulders. "No, not home!" he said gently. "You shall come with me, Joseph, and we will go away, and I shall take care of you always."

"Go away?" asked his brother. "You will take me away, Thomas, far away from them?" He glanced fearfully into the cave behind him.

"Yes, far away, let us go now," said Thomas, taking him by the arm. "Look, I see

a spring of water. We shall sit down and rest and have dinner there together as we used to. Don't you remember, Joseph, when we used to walk over the hills when we were boys, and through the orchards and the vineyards? Come, let us go!"

"Yes! Yes!" replied the man eagerly, "let us go away."

Down the hillside they went, Matthew following, along a bypath which led to a spring upon the hillside. There they sat and rested. From an overhanging vine Thomas gathered some bunches of grapes, while Matthew took food from their wallet and spread their noon-day meal upon the grass in the shade of the trees.

"Ah!" cried Thomas in a cheerful voice, "this is like the old days, Joseph, grapes with our bread and olives—olives? Yes, sure enough, there are some on yonder tree. Bring them, Joseph, while I get some more of these grapes."

Thus with a running stream of reminiscent talk Thomas kept the mind of his brother occupied while they had their meal together.

The poor wretch was hungry, ravenously hungry and weak from hunger. After they had eaten, as they lay resting in the shade Thomas began to tell his brother of the wonderful experiences through which he had passed, all beginning, centering, ending in the Prophet, the new and marvellous Prophet of Nazareth. Gradually his brother seemed to wake to intelligence, gradually his interest became concentrated upon the Prophet of Nazareth, the Master, as Thomas named Him, and long before the sunny afternoon had faded into evening he had become more like a human being than he had been for many, many months.

But as evening drew on he again became restless, his glance furtive, his limbs began to tremble. Suddenly with a cry he sprang to his feet, his eyes glittering with the horrid light of the insane. "They are calling me," he cried, "I must go." Rigid he stood, pointing to the cave on the hillside from which he had come.

"No, brother," said Thomas, "you are going back to them never again. You are going with me."

"No, they are upon me!" shrieked the un-

happy man, flinging his arms high over his head.

For a single instant Thomas hesitated, cast an appealing glance at his friend, Matthew, then resolutely turned to his brother.

"Joseph, my brother, give heed to me." His voice rang out clear, calm and steady. "Never shall they get you again."

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" with the loud despairing, horrid cry of semi-insanity the demoniac tore his hands free from his brother's grasp. "I tell you they are upon me!" he cried.

"Never shall they have you! Never shall they have you in their cruel sway again!" Then Thomas' voice rose in tones of commanding authority: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth I bid you foul spirits depart from him, and never enter him again."

Immediately the demoniac fell as if stricken, and lay motionless upon the ground. But Thomas took him by the hand and lifted him up, saying to him, "Brother Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth has made you whole."

Weak, shaking in every limb but with the light of sanity in his quiet eyes Joseph stood for a moment looking at his brother. Then

falling upon his knees he lifted up his voice, broken with sobs and gave praise to Jehovah, the God of Israel for His salvation.

"And to Jesus, my Master, whose power has made you whole," said Thomas in a voice thrilling with joy and gratitude and pride.

"Yes, to Jesus of Nazareth, your Master and mine, who has made me whole," said Joseph.

That night they spent upon the hillside, the brothers side by side, sleeping together as when they were children with their arms around each other. When morning broke they awoke to a new world, a world of heavenly peace and heavenly joy.

When they had finished their morning meal Thomas, turning to his brother, said:

"We have a mission to your village, Joseph. But first we shall go home."

"Home?" said Joseph. A gleam of fear came into his eyes, but passed as quickly as it came. "Yes, we shall go home," he said. "I wish to go home. Let us hasten home together."

They set off for the village, the brothers

walking close together, with few words, but now and then with a touch of hand or arm or shoulder just to assure themselves that the mighty salvation wrought was real.

"You have a mission to our village from your Master," said Joseph, "but after your mission is done I greatly desire to go with you, Thomas, to see Him and tell Him my gratitude, to kiss His feet."

"You wish to serve Him?"

"Yes," said Joseph, his eyes alight with an ecstasy of gratitude. "Yes, to serve Him with all my powers, with my whole life."

"Then," replied Thomas, "go to your village, show to your friends what Jesus of Nazareth has done for you. Tell them how he loved you, and sent us to you. Tell them that His Kingdom is at hand, and bid them prepare for His coming, so will you serve Him best."

Thus it came that when their mission in that village was accomplished they left behind them the man whom Jesus had restored to sanity, to peace of heart and mind, to full manhood.

And it came to pass that he went everywhere through all that country telling what great things Jesus of Nazareth had done for

him. And seeing and hearing him all men did marvel.

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Now when their mission was accomplished the disciple band returned to their Master with great joy, and told Him what great things had been wrought at their hands by His power. And the Master looking upon them with love and pride in His eyes said: "Come ye apart and rest awhile."

And that is the final touch in the making of His disciples into Harvesters, *resting awhile with the Master of the Harvest.*

IV

THE LEADERLESS MAN

THE LEADERLESS MAN

It is a young man that comes running to Jesus. Youth, the finest of all the gifts of the gods is his. Youth with its courage, its curiosity, its resilient optimism, its aspiration, its spirit of venture, youth with its superb capacity for faith and hope and love. It gives colour and charm and preciousness to every other endowment. With all its perversities and perils, with its ignorance and recklessness and folly, youth remains that which gives zest to life, and without which life may well become dull and vapid. Yet for all its splendid promise youth at times ends in tragic failure; and always because of one supreme lack.

Such tragic failure is concreted in the story of the Young Ruler. No incident in the life of Jesus is so full of pathetic tragedy as the meeting between that young man and the young Prophet of Nazareth, and none is richer in material for solemn thought. In a few vivid words he is abruptly introduced into the story.

One morning he comes running, and kneeling in the dust before the Prophet, makes request concerning the deep things of life and eternity, receives his answer and goes away. He is one of the men in the Scripture record of whom we long to know more, a young man with a fascinating personality, richly endowed, and singularly unspoiled by his endowments. Rich he was, cultured and well-bred, educated in the great and splendid literature of his people, devoted to the faith of his fathers, with the result that he has been honored with an office earnestly coveted in his social and religious world, that of Director or Ruler in the local synagogue. Yet with all his endowments and all his privileges he carries in his heart a noble discontent. With scrupulous care he has observed The Law and shares the pride of his class in his standing before The Law, yet with all his attainment he is haunted by a sense of imperfection. When he is at his best he is conscious of that in him repugnant to the Holy God whom he seeks to worship and obey. His conscience at times leaps upon him and convicts him of failure. This sense of imperfection, this conviction of sin works in him a fur-

ther anxiety. He is haunted by an uncertainty as to the issue of life. After death what? From his study of the literature of his people he wins a doubtful assurance. The light which it sheds upon that momentous question at best is but dim. He takes his questions to the doctors of the Law, but finds that they know as little as he. They have given up troubling themselves with questions which they regard as impossible of solution. At times occupied with the daily business of life he forgets, but again with fiercer insistence these questions start up before his soul demanding answer. Hence with all the delights that his luxurious and cultured life, that his wealth and high estate can offer him, the young man carries an unquiet heart, and is ever on the quest of an answer to these supreme questions.

One day in the market place of his village he sees, far at the other side, a crowd clustering close about the tall form of a young man, and hanging eagerly upon his words. Over the crowd, like the tones of a silver bell, come the words of the speaker. Now and again the young man catches a phrase. He is apparently proclaiming a new Kingdom for Israel,

a Kingdom of righteousness, a Kingdom of God.

"Ha," says the Young Ruler to himself, "a Prophet." And caught by the music of his voice, and by the mystic meaning of the words, as well as by the lofty bearing of the youthful speaker, he draws nearer, and for an hour stands listening to the new and wonderful message which this Young Prophet is giving forth to the people in such simple speech as all can understand, and with the authority that goes only with conviction of the truth which He proclaims.

At a pause in the speaking a startling incident occurs. Some women in the throng with babes in their arms, and with the sublime assurance of mothers, hold up their babes for the Prophet's blessing. Their presumption stirs the wrath of the men standing about the Prophet. How absurdly lacking in a sense of propriety. Surely this interrupting of a wonderful sermon like this is something highly reprehensible. With angry rebukes they thrust these mothers with their babes back to their proper place.

Immediately the Young Prophet's voice

rings forth in indignant reproof. "Let the little children come to me," He says. "Do not keep them back, of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

In the presence of the amazed throng, the Young Prophet takes the little ones in His arms, and lays His hands upon them in blessing.

"Listen," He says, "he that will not receive the Kingdom of Heaven as a little child shall not enter therein."

The Young Ruler is strangely stirred.

"Ah," he says, "that is the man for me! He is a wise man and a great. He can answer my questions."

He would have gone straight to the Prophet then, but that the market is filled with the ignorant and evil-smelling crowd that throng Him. From this vulgar herd he has ever kept himself aloof. He resolves, however, that that very evening he will find opportunity to get to Him, and later sends his servant to make appointment. But his servant brings the word back that the Prophet has gone to be the guest of some very common people, and can not be seen. Brings too with him strange tales of the

Prophet, of His wonderful wisdom, His acts of mighty power, His accessibility to all classes of the people. This is by no means the first time he has heard of this Prophet of Nazareth. The whole countryside is filled with stories of Him, some in high praise of Him. He is undoubtedly gracious to the sick, the demon possessed, the poor. Others are not so favourable. He has clashed with the religious leaders of Israel. He has even spoken lightly of Moses and the Law, and He is lax, strangely lax, in His observance of the teachings and traditions of the Doctors of the Law. But He is undoubtedly a great Prophet. And the words which the Young Ruler caught this morning have entered deeply into his heart, and have convinced him that the Prophet is a man of God, and bears a message from God.

That evening the Young Ruler has no taste for his dinner, nor can all the daughters of music bring him ease of mind. All night long he tosses sleepless upon his bed, haunted by his unanswered questions, vaguely stirred by his remembrance of the words of the Young Prophet, who took the little children in His arms.

From his sleepless couch he rises with the dawn and passes into his garden. Happening to glance through his gateway he sees far up the road a little company setting forth upon their journey. It is the Prophet, he discovers, and His band of disciples. He is leaving the town, he may never come again, he has lost his chance of speech with Him. Quickly the young gentleman tucks up the skirts of his robe under his girdle, and, forgetting his culture, his dignity, his wealth, his high estate, he runs, as any common man might run, out upon the road and up the hill, thrusts himself through the band of disciples, falls in the dust at the Young Prophet's feet, and there cries out to him the questions that are tearing at his soul.

"Good Master," he cries, "what more can I do that I may attain perfection? What good thing can I do that I may win Eternal Life?"

The Young Prophet lifts him to his feet, and sets himself to search this young man's heart.

"Good Master! Do you mean that? Who is good but God? The suggestion being, where do you place me in relation to God?"

But that question is beyond the Young

Ruler, and so the Prophet lets it rest. But He searches further into his life.

"What about the commandments?" He says. "What about your life?"

Looking straight into the Young Prophet's eyes the Young Ruler makes answer, an answer that reveals a life and character so beautiful, so clean, so high that the Young Prophet's heart goes out to him in yearning love, and He sets himself to win this Young Ruler for Himself.

Of all the men with whom this Young Prophet came into touch, of none other is it said that He loved him, with the single exception of the beloved disciple. He has a place for a man like this in the band of His immediate followers. He can make use of him, a man so pure of life, so high of soul, so eager in his quest after things Eternal. With all His heart he strives to win him. "What good thing shall I do to attain perfection? What more shall I do to gain eternal life?" In the Young Ruler's mind the note of interrogation stands against two matters of the very highest importance, Character and Destiny. Here stands young manhood at its very highest;

small wonder that the heart of the Master goes out to him. But the Prophet's method is very sure. He can be nothing less than utterly true. He will not deceive this young man, with his fine ideals, and his clean life. In a single phrase, terse, simple, comprehensive, the Young Prophet answers both questions.

"What must you do to attain perfection? Follow me! What must you do to win eternal life? Follow me!"

In this answer the Prophet deals with a fundamental error in the Young Ruler's mind, which he shares with the thinking men of his nation and time, an error in regard to the Young Ruler's ethical standard. You ask what good thing you shall do to attain perfection. Perfection is no reward for doing. Perfection is a natural development of the Divine life in the soul of man. There is a fundamental immorality in the religion that offers "perfection" as a reward for certain services rendered. "Perfection" does not lie in the strict observance of Law, but in joyous delight in Him whose will is expressed in Law.

You ask about Eternal Life. Eternal Life is not gained by the keeping of commandments.

Eternal Life like all life is a Divine gift, the result of a Divine creative act in the soul. Neither is Perfect Character attained nor Eternal Life won by the keeping of commandments.

But this fundamental error in the ethical standards of peoples ancient and modern, persists with a strange tenacity. It is the characteristic of the self-centred, self-governed life. The Young Ruler listens with amazement. "Think not of more laws and stricter regulations," says the Prophet. "What you require is not another Law, but a Leader. Come, follow me!" Wonderful answer this! Wonderful in its simplicity, wonderful in its wisdom, wonderful in its love!

For nineteen hundred years the noblest souls of the race have tested it and have found it to be a sure and satisfactory solution of these great interrogations, a solution worthy of the Infinite mind, of the Infinite heart of the Eternal Father going forth in compassion.

The Prophet has spoken the word. The Young Ruler has got his answer to his questions, an answer clear, definite, unmistakable. The one lack in his life stands out defined in

sunlight clearness. He knows now that what he needs is a Leader. A Leader who will command the allegiance of his mind, of his heart, a Leader of his conscience, a Leader following whom he shall attain that high thing, that perfection of character, which has been his ideal for so long, following whom he will find himself after life is done in possession of what he thinks of as Eternal Life.

Hofmann's picture shows the two young men standing fronting each other. The Young Ruler's face handsome, high-bred, clean, fine, carries a look of puzzled petulance, on the Young Prophet's face a look of deep wistful yearning, but also of relentless finality. He has gone to the limit in the condition which He has offered. He has exhausted His power of persuasive appeal. The responsibility is now with this man to whom His heart has gone out in yearning love. "Follow me." It is now with this young gentleman. Will he follow? He stands holding the Prophet's eyes. Truly here is a man to follow. A moment, two moments, many moments he stands swaying toward the Prophet. He is going after Him. A bird sings from a tree in the hedgerow. His

eye turns to the bird, then to the group about the Prophet, notes their rough dress, their common faces, their toil-stained hands. Ah! their toil-stained hands! He turns half round, he stares at the ground. Starts as if waking from a dream, still staring at the ground as at something lying there—stares—steps backward—slowly turns from the Prophet and with never a look more at Him walks slowly down the road, turns in at his gate, and we have never seen him since.

What halted him? What turned him back? Life with this man as Leader strongly drew him. The path which opened at his feet down which this man would lead him was one where the going was sure, and the ending glorious. What halted him? That thing at his feet! A fearsome thing! A cross! He saw as in a flash of light that if he followed he must follow as poor as any one of that company. His beautiful home, his life of luxurious and cultured leisure, his security, all his friendships with the learned, the great, all that, and much more he must to-day abandon, completely and forever. Then there are the long and toilsome journeys, the uncertainties of fortune. How will they

live? They are all evidently without money! They must live upon the charity of the people! Can he endure that? And there will be dangers, opposition, contempt from his own class, his own best friends. Can he support that? Ah! That cross has a cruel look! Can he dare pick it up and carry it after this Prophet? "He had great possessions." What thing is this that can so paralyse the finer instincts, that can cloud the vision, that can debase the affections, warp the judgment so that a man can deliberately turn aside from all that his noblest self approves? What in God's name is this thing? "He had great possessions," and the dread of losing them wrought this evil thing in him. This Lord Christ has no quarrel with wealth, men of wealth have been among His friends, men of wealth have served Him greatly. But He thinks and teaches very clearly about it. Riches are a disappointment, moth and rust and thieves do away with them. They harden the heart toward man. Dives has less pity than the dogs for Lazarus at his gate. They stupefy the soul toward God. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink and be merry!" They halt the steps

of those who might follow God; "he went sadly away for he had great possessions."

The Prophet knows well that the Young Ruler has no need of wealth to follow Him. Rather will wealth be an embarrassment to him. And more than that it will work mischief in the band. While the Prophet knows the disappointment, the danger in great possessions He makes no war upon wealth, but for this Young Ruler with his temperament, his history, his physical and spiritual equipment He knows that if he means to "follow," the only thing to be done with his possessions is to get rid of them. Stripped "bare" he can "follow," embarrassed with "great possessions" he will find the pace too hot for him.

"Sell all, give to the poor, come, follow me!" That is the only program for the Young Ruler if he is to keep pace with this Leader.

Whither is He going, this adventurous Young Leader? Over the hill to touch into sight the eyes of a blind man, sitting hopeless by the city gates. Through thronging villages and towns to bring to multitudes of sick, despairing, broken folk, health, healing, hope, and then at night to pray, perhaps to sleep

under the stars on the mountain side. To meet a leper in the place of the unclean outside the gate, and cleanse his defilement with a touch. To preach to the outcast and friendless and unhappy of humanity His new Gospel of the Kingdom, and call them to fellowship and friendship with Himself. To dine with a high dignitary of the Church, and at His host's dinner table, and in the teeth of his scornful criticism, champion a sinful and repentant woman of the streets, and call her His friend. To the great city He is going and to Israel's Holy Place, and there to scourge from God's Holy Temple the ungodly mob of aristocratic traffickers who have made of it a robber's den. Long journeys He is going over mountains and through valleys, into lonely deserts and through crowding villages, often weary, hungry, thirsty, lonely and sick at heart from the indifference and hate of men. At last to the nation's Holy Council He is going, there to be tried, flouted, mocked, condemned, then to the Roman judgment seat, there to be tried again, proved innocent, condemned, scourged. Finally He is going to be dragged to Golgotha and there nailed to His Cross. What place in

all this is there for a Young Ruler of the Synagogue with great possessions? There is nothing other for it. The Young Ruler must "sell," "give," before he can follow a Leader who is going on such a journey. But alas! "he has great possessions," he has them where it is fatal for a man to have them, not in banks or bonds, but in his heart. So he can not bring himself to "sell." He loves them. That is his undoing. God Himself can not make a man "perfect" nor give him "Eternal Life" who loves his "possessions." Why? Because Love is a transforming thing. A man becomes like what he most loves. The love of mere possessions, of mere things, will degrade him and destroy him. The Young Prophet is in loving fellowship with the Source of all perfection. To love Him is to become like Him. This Young Prophet is in living touch with the Source of Life. To love Him is to live for ever. He only has hope of attaining perfection and Life Eternal who resolves to "follow" Him.

That was a bad day for the Young Ruler. The first look of his home on his return that day cheered his heart. How nearly in a mad

moment he had lost all this. After all he had chosen wisely. But before the night had gone he was not so sure. In the days that followed he came to fear he had made a mistake, for he found himself without an interest in life. That striving of his for "perfection," that anxious questioning as to "Eternal Life," that was all over. He had had his answer. No more of that for him. What now to do with life? What path was now open to him? Who could show him that?

One Man there was who could have led him. But Him he had refused. Who was there, priest, scribe, Doctor of the Law could lead him now? Alas! He was a *leaderless* man. Like a ship without a rudder he must be the sport of the wayward winds, of the changeful tides of life. The steady flow of Time's river would carry him down, down, down toward the grey mists of a homeless sea.

Oh, had he but yielded to that entreating voice! Had he but responded to that deep call of his own conscience, heart, soul! Had he but followed his Leader! What enterprises and achievements had been his. How full would life have been of life's greatest thing, love, love

going forth in compassion for those who need compassion, in chivalry toward the weak, the oppressed, the fettered! What companions he might have had, Peter, John, Stephen and Paul! What undying friendship would have been his with this Jesus. How men might have loved him, his name for ever high on Time's Honor Roll, and graven on the hands of God! If only he had had the courage to "sell," "give" and "follow" his Leader! Then at the last, all journeys done, a call from that dear voice "Come, follow me," would fall upon his ear, and gleaming for him across the waters would be the warm lights of Home.

V

LIFE'S GREATEST DAY

LIFE'S GREATEST DAY

"THEN He entered Jericho. And as He passed through it, there was a man called Zacchæus the head of the taxgatherers, a wealthy man, who tried to see what Jesus was like; but he could not, on account of the crowd —for he was small of stature. So he ran forward and climbed into a sycamore tree to get a sight of Him, as He was to pass that road. But when Jesus reached the spot He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchæus, come down at once, for I must stay at your house to-day.' He came down at once and welcomed Him gladly. But when they saw this, every one began to mutter that He had gone to be the guest of a sinner. So Zacchæus stopped and said to the Lord, 'I will give the half of all I have, Lord, to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will give him back four times as much.' And Jesus said of him, 'To-day salvation has come to this house, since Zacchæus

here is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost.' "

SAINT LUKE.

* * * * * * *

At first glance he was an insignificant looking little man, more especially when seen on the street. But sitting behind his desk to those paying their taxes he was anything but insignificant. His hard face, his keen eye, his thin lips induced in those who drew near his place of business mingled hatred, fear and respect.

"Thirteen shillings," he said to a poorly clad woman who timidly approached him.

"My lawyer said ten," she humbly remonstrated.

"Thirteen shillings," he repeated, with a snap to his jaws.

Hurriedly she paid the extra amount and fled.

A haughty, dignified Pharisee came to the counter and without a word laid down a sum of money.

With a dexterous movement of his fingers the little man spread out the money, glanced at it and said, "Nine pounds."

"Seven was my tax last year. There has

been no change in the rate," replied the Pharisee, glancing down in cold contempt at the little Publican.

"Nine pounds," was the calm reply.

"Why the advance?" demanded the Pharisee.

"Why? Because I make it so," answered the Chief Publican, in so fierce a tone that the Pharisee's pride wilted. He hesitated a moment, paid the extra two pounds, and went his way, speechless in his rage.

A sturdy well-to-do landowner followed and addressed the Chief Publican with rough but forced gaiety.

"Ah, Zacchæus, still robbing us?"

The little Publican smiled back at him, an evil smile, and sat waiting.

"You charged me last year twenty-three pounds," said the farmer. "Six too much, our magistrate says. But this year I am ready for you. There is your tax and all you will get from me."

Zacchæus glanced at the money. "Twenty-six pounds this year."

"What? Twenty-six pounds?" roared the farmer, leaning far over the counter. "Our

magistrate says the tax is only seventeen pounds."

"Twenty-six pounds," answered the Chief Publican quietly, with his evil smile.

"You are a thief and the son of a generation of thieves," shrilled the farmer, sweeping his hand toward the little man and missing him by an inch.

"You would smite me?" snarled the Chief Publican, throwing a sign to his clerk, who slipped out through the rear door.

"Smite you? I would—I would—crush you, like the vile reptile you are," shrieked the farmer, beside himself with fury. "Last year he robbed me of six pounds," he continued to the crowd which had gathered around them, "to-day he would rob me of nine pounds."

"Ah! vile thief!" "Bloodsucker!" "Dog of a Publican!" "He robbed me, too!" "And me!" "And me!" "And the widow Rachael!" "And the blind weaver!" On every side rose clamorous cries of rage and hate. With the same evil smile curling his thin lips, the Chief Publican stood watchful, but undisturbed, his keen, shifty eyes passing from face to face, as if noting for future dealing, his assailants.

Closer pressed the mob, their fury rising higher every moment.

"Seventeen I will pay you, and by the beard of Abraham, not a penny more!" shouted the landowner, striking his hand violently upon the counter. "I should have back six pounds which you robbed me of last year, you rat, and your skin as well!" He made as if to leap over the counter, but at that moment a sergeant of the local Roman guard, accompanied by two soldiers, tramped round the corner.

"What is all this noise about?" demanded the sergeant. The crowd fell back from him.

"Robbery!" "Oppression!" "Tyranny!" shouted a score of voices.

"This thief is robbing me, sergeant, of nine pounds. He stole six pounds from me last year."

The sergeant turned to the Publican.

"What is this, Zacchæus?"

"He refuses to pay his taxes, and wickedly proceeds to raise a riot," said the Chief Publican apparently deeply grieved at the outrageous conduct of the farmer and of his fellow citizens.

"Won't pay his taxes? Raising a riot?

This is a serious offence!" A sharp order and the two soldiers moved upon the farmer, seized him by the arms and held him fast. "And you!" said the sergeant, striding toward the crowd, "What do you want? Hence!"

Like sheep before a wolf they scattered at his approach.

"Bring him along!" he ordered gruffly, "we shall see what the Captain says about rebellion and riot!"

"Oh, Sergeant! Don't take me to prison!" wailed the farmer, pitifully, "I'll pay! I'll pay all he asks!" Too well he knew the horror of the prison, the long drawn, costly process of law, the hopelessness of a case against a tax-gatherer. Well, too, he knew Rome's stern intolerance of anything that in the slightest degree savoured of riot or rebellion.

"Come along!" commanded the sergeant, setting off down the street.

"Oh, pity me!" cried the terrified man. "Pity my wife and children! There is no one at my home! Oh, Zacchæus! Zacchæus! Be merciful! I will pay you what you ask."

"Let him go, Sergeant. He will pay his taxes and there will be no more riot," said the

little taxgatherer, the evil smile still on his thin lips.

"Very well. If you say so," replied the Sergeant, grudgingly. "Come, pay up, then."

"Twenty-eight pounds—now," said Zacchæus with a wink to his friend the sergeant, his evil smile broadening to a grin.

After the departure of the landowner there was a slight transfer of money from the Publican to the soldier, as they parted company in mutual good will.

So through the morning hours the taxes as imposed by the little Publican came rolling in, smoothly and in a steady stream, meeting the demands of the hated foreign government, and incidentally filling up the coffers of the more deeply hated Chief Publican, Zacchæus.

With very considerable satisfaction he sat in his office during the slack mid-day hours, nibbling his frugal lunch and adding up his morning's takings. On the whole business had been rather better than usual. The country people were crowding into the town in large numbers to see and hear this young Prophet of Nazareth, who was making such a stir in the town. Like all Prophets, he was

either fool or knave, deceiving either himself or the people. But Zacchæus had no fault to find so long as His presence in the town brought in business.

But keen as was his devotion to business and satisfactory as were the returns for the morning, the Chief Publican was not without a consciousness of a certain uneasiness. The rumour of this new Prophet had wakened in his Jewish heart vague questionings. Publican though he was and traitor to his race and his religion, deep down in the heart of him there was that which stirred at any national awakening. When years ago in early manhood he had determined to enter a Publican's office, there was no purpose in him of deliberately abandoning his nation, his nation's religion, his nation's hope. No! Urged by the bitter experience of poverty, he determined to choose this as the easiest and quickest path to wealth. When he had made his money he would give up this disgraceful business. But with money grows the lust for it. Besides, having once adopted a business which practically rendered him an outcast from his own people, he had found it difficult to retrace his steps. Not

only had he taken service under the hated tyrant of his race, but in the exercise of his office as taxgatherer he had adopted the usual practice that went with it, he extorted from the people not their taxes only, but as much more as he safely could for his own private purse. The more successful he was the more hated he became, and the deeper grew the gulf which separated him from his people and all that they venerated. He found himself ostracised from his kindred. He had gained the thing he had striven for. But he had lost all that once he had loved, and now at mid-life he found himself a lonely man. A man who has won the contempt of his own people finds it hard to retain the respect and affection of even those nearest to him. The wife of his bosom no longer gave to Zacchæus the reverence which she once had for him. His only son still in his early teens had become embittered by his experience of the contempt and hatred which his fellows poured out upon him for his father's sake.

For all his wealth and power there were bitter hours for Zacchæus, hours in which he came to know that, after all, the finest things

in life could not be had for money. The affection of a friend, the esteem of his fellows, the love of wife and son, these and like priceless things, all his money would not buy. And there were those other things. What of the Ancient Faith of his people? What of those heroic days of Israel's mighty past? What of Jehovah, Israel's God? What of Israel's age-long hope? Might it not be that in this young Prophet, Jehovah was again visiting His people? These thoughts were disturbing. Zacchæus resolutely thrust them from him. He must attend to his business.

Upon his musings a subordinate in the profession burst in abruptly, "Have you heard the news, Zacchæus? About the Prophet?"

"Have you brought your monthly statement with you?" asked Zacchæus sharply.

"I quite forgot it in my excitement, I have just seen—"

"What, it matters not. Let me see your statement," snapped his chief.

"Here it is. And this is your portion," replied the subordinate, laying a paper with some money upon the counter.

A single glance and the Chief Publican

turned savagely upon him. "Last time I warned you, Aram, as to inaccuracies in your calculations. Now I have done with you. Go bring me what you owe. Another will take your place to-morrow."

"Oh, master, I did not mean—"

"Go!" snarled Zacchæus. "I saved you from prison last month. I delivered you from the rabble a year ago. No one deceives Zacchæus twice! Go!"

Vainly this unhappy man poured out his lamentation.

"I will repay fourfold," he cried.

"Go!"

"Tenfold!"

"Begone!"

"Twentyfold! Thirty!"

Zacchæus hesitated. "Bring me fiftyfold reparation and one more chance will I give you. One more chance only, Aram! You hear me?"

"Oh, yes, dear master! I hear! I hear! You are as God Himself! It is vain to try to deceive you!" He turned away trembling.

"You forgot your news," said the clerk in a cheerful voice, as he passed on his way.

Aram paused. "Yes! I forgot my news," he said bitterly. "Some day it may be of interest to you, and to all Publicans."

"Ho, ho!" cried the clerk.

"He may sweep all this away!"

"What? Who?"

"This new Prophet. And not a bad thing, either!" growled Aram.

"I have heard of Him," laughed the clerk. "The demons obey Him. He is their Chief, they say."

"It is false! He is a holy man," said Aram in a low intense voice. "He is kind to the sick, the needy, to the lepers even. He proclaims a new Kingdom for Israel," he added, with a glance toward the Chief Publican.

"A new Kingdom!" answered the clerk in a low tone. "Wait for me down the street," he turned toward the Chief Publican, who was deep in his books.

"Shall I go with Aram and bring his dues?" he asked. Zacchæus nodded a careless assent.

"I have heard much about this young Prophet," said the young man eagerly as he moved off with the other. "Tell me about Him."

"He is wonderful!" exclaimed his companion. "They all say He will sweep away the Roman and all his evil brood. Would to God He might. Then this vampire would cease sucking our life blood. Gladly would I lose my place if only I could see him meet his due reward."

"He is truly a son of Belial!" said the clerk, "and in league with all the devils. It is vain to try to deceive him. He knows your very thoughts, and he is merciless. He took from me this week one-half my wages for a slight offence. But the Prophet! Tell me of Him. Some praise, some blame Him."

"For me, I say He is a mighty Prophet. This very day I meant to tell you He opened a blind man's eyes! Made him see!"

"You are mad! Who told you this folly?"

"No folly is it. I know the man!"

"Know him? Who is he?"

"The son of Timæus."

"The old beggar at the gate? I know him well! Opened his eyes!"

"His eyes! And they say he has done many things quite as wonderful."

"What things?"

"He makes the lame walk! He cleanses the lepers! He exorcises demons! He is a holy Prophet indeed. And they say," added the publican in a doubting voice, "but this I cannot believe, that He is accessible to all kinds of people, the outcast, and consorts with our class, nay, that He even has a publican among His followers."

The publican, once launched upon his tale, forgot even the pain and rage of his recent experience, and poured out a recital of the marvellous doings and sayings of the young Prophet of Nazareth.

"I must run and bring this to the master," cried the clerk, standing still. "A publican, you say, among His followers. Impossible!"

"Your master? That robber? He will rob you of the rest of your week's pay if you bring not my money with you," said the publican. "He has no interest in prophets."

"Nay! He is mightily stirred up about this Prophet. He is more than anxious to see Him and hear Him."

"Well, the Prophet is passing through the city to-day," said the publican. "I meant to tell Zacchæus, but now I would hide it from

him, the little thief. I am sorry I told you if you now go to tell him."

"I must run to him. He may reward me. He is greatly disturbed about this Prophet. He is anxious and afraid."

"Afraid?"

"He fears I know not what. Certainly, I have never known him fear the face of man. But I must run. He may restore me my wages."

"Restore you anything? You go on a fool's errand," replied the publican. "But go, and take him my curse with you."

"Nay, Aram, I am your friend," cried the clerk as he ran back with the news.

He had not overestimated his master's anxiety for news about the new Prophet. So completely was the Chief Publican aroused by the wonderful news which his clerk brought him that he completely forgot to upbraid him for failing to bring with him the money which his subordinate had failed to pay as his due percentage on the monthly tax returns. But chiefly was he stirred by his clerk's assertion that the Prophet had actually called to his band one of his own order, a publican.

"That simply can not be! Else He is no Prophet of Jehovah! A publican, a follower of a holy Prophet!" Zacchæus laughed grimly. Publicans and prophets were as far sundered as Heaven and Hell. He was no Prophet. He was a mad fanatic, a deceiver of the people, with magic wiles and mad talk of a coming Kingdom for Israel. The Chief Publican had known such. The days of the Prophets were gone for ever. True, there was John, the Baptizer. He had heard him, had been deeply moved by his message. Had John continued his ministry it might have been different with Zacchæus. But Herod had made short work of John and his prophecies. It would be the same with this Prophet.

But these mighty works! The blind son of Timæus at the Gate! Zacchæus knew him well. And the lepers! To help them! What if He were one of the old prophets come again? Esaias? The thought struck a chill to the Chief Publican's heart. If this were so, it would be a sad day for all who, as he, had turned traitor to their country, their people, their religion, their God. A day of vengeance it would surely be, as prophesied by Esaias.

He wished he could see the Prophet. He could better estimate His quality. He could better estimate the value of His message. He made a sudden resolve. He *would* see Him. He was passing through the city. He would go at once and seek Him.

Immediately he was in action.

Outside his booth a group of boys was talking eagerly. They were talking about the Prophet, about His latest mighty work, on the blind man at the city gate.

"I saw Him touch him, Sala," said one boy to another.

"He never touched Him," replied Sala. "He just said 'open' and his eyes opened right up."

"And the old cripple, that old man that—"

"I know him," Sala swelled with the importance of the knowledge. "He comes to our house for alms, old Jacob is his name. Well! I saw the Prophet heal him. He came up close to the side of the street and just held out his hands like that—just held out his hands—he never said a word—and the people pushed him back to the wall and he gave a kind of cry. Then the Prophet stood still, said something

to the people about him, and made a sign with his hand, like that. And they all pushed back, and old Jacob came hobbling up on his crutches, right close to Him. And every one got quiet, and then He said something to Jacob, and put His hand on his shoulder, just like that. And—and—do you know? Jacob's face looked kind of funny, like as if he had just waked up out of sleep. He stretched himself up, then gave a jump in the air and began shouting something and all the people began shouting and I shouted, too. And old Jacob just threw himself down at the Prophet's feet and kissed His feet. I would do the same," and little Sala's face was aglow with passionate love and admiration.

"Boy!" said Zacchæus in a hoarse voice, "where is He?"

"Who?" said the boy, startled.

"The Prophet!" said the Chief Publican, gripping the boy's arm.

The boy, seeing who it was that had seized him, wrenched himself free.

"Go and find out, Rat face!" he jeered, grinning at the Chief Publican from a safe distance. "I hate him!" he said venomously

to his comrades. "He is a mean little thief. He stole our vineyard and then he got my father into prison." He picked up a stone and flung it after the Chief Publican, who was hurrying down the street.

"He's off to meet the Prophet. Don't you hear them shouting? I hope he won't see Him. Come on!" said Sala, setting off toward the approaching company, and keeping the little Publican in sight.

For a time it seemed as if the boy's hope would be fulfilled. Around the back of the crowd the Chief Publican dodged, seeking a passage through, but in vain. The little man was well known. Every one appeared to take delight in thwarting his evident desire. Over and over again he attempted to bore through only to be met with a contemptuous glance, a curse and an obstinate elbow. Finally, to the boy's infinite joy, he gave up the attempt and hurried away, followed by the hoots and jeers of the boys, and of such of the company as noted his departure.

On swept the tumultuous company, loud in their praises of the Prophet, pausing with Him as He halted to do another deed of mercy,

and sweeping on again with louder and louder acclaim. Through the crowded business section of the city the procession made its way till it came to quieter streets. Suddenly there was a definite halt. The Prophet had come to a stand beneath a wayside sycamore and was peering up among its leaves, and apparently speaking. The boys pushed through and stood as near the tree as they dared. There was a rustling among the leaves, a swift descent and the boys stood aghast.

"It is Rat face!" whispered the indignant Sala. "Look at him! Just look at him! Right up beside the Prophet!"

He might well exclaim. The crowding people were exclaiming amazed, horrified, for there before their eyes the Prophet and the unspeakable little publican strutting beside Him, were off to dine together. Behind them followed the whole company. They were furiously angry. Their sense of propriety, of decency, their national pride, their religious convictions, were all deeply outraged. Their idol, their great Prophet, whom they were beginning to regard as perchance Israel's Coming One, had degraded Himself and them.

Louder and louder grew the murmurs of indignation.

Sala with his comrades followed up close. Could he have slain the rat-faced little wretch who was thus the means of his hero's degradation, gladly would he have done so. This Prophet knew not what sort of man he was walking with. Sala could tell Him things that would make Him spurn this little thief from Him. The Prophet was being deceived and humiliated.

But all undisturbed, the Prophet walked beside His new friend, His face alight with love, it almost seemed with pride. Not so the little publican, his face mirrored his conflicting emotions. Wonder, pride, joy, love were there in swift succession, but as the voices of the crowd grew more and more strident, shame, anger, humiliation followed. They were heaping abuse, scorn, rage upon, not him, that would have hurt him not a whit, but upon this young man at his side, this Prophet, this wonderful Prophet who had dared to call him friend. Up to the very door of his house, the jeering, raging mob followed the Chief Publican and his new friend, the Prophet. He

was actually going in to dine with the publican. He would be for ever disgraced in the eyes of all the good people. If he only dared Sala would have told Him the truth.

The strain upon the little publican becomes intolerable. Hot with indignation at their abuse of his friend, he turns upon his tormentors, and, standing at his house door, breaks into loud speech; "Master," he cries, thrilling with passion, "I will give the half of all I have to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody, I will give him back four times as much."

This is too much for Sala. "He is a thief," cries the boy. "He stole my father's vineyard, and put him in prison. He is a liar and a thief."

The Prophet turns toward the boy. "He was, but not now," He says in a voice grave, kind and instinct with an emotion that subdued the hearts of men.

A great silence falls upon the multitude. What has come to this man? The half of his goods! a fourfold restoration of ill-gotten wealth to his victims! This will strip him bare. They know well his history. In awed silence

they wait the Prophet's word. The amazing thing, after all, is quite simple. Zacchæus is a saved man. All that he has lost and infinitely more he has recovered. In the gaining of this wealth of his he had sacrificed his country, his race, his friends, his faith, his God. To-day he has come into that rich, that marvellous heritage of his people. "He, too, is a son of Abraham." He has come into the great family of the Faithful. He has abandoned all that came between his soul and his God. He, like Abraham, has heard the call of Jehovah, and into the unknown he has made the Great Adventure.

It was Zacchæus' great day when he brought Jesus into his home. Behind the latticed door his wife stood trembling, fearful, wrathful, despairing, listening to her husband as he made his wild declaration. What was this that had come to her husband? What madness had seized him? She waited for him to come in. She would have something to say to him. But he came not alone. A stranger upon whom he himself, demeaning himself as a servant, waited with towel and basin for His feet, eager to do Him honor, a stranger, won-

derful in face, in speech, in bearing, was with him. It was the Prophet Himself. She, too, had heard of Him, and in her heart had longed to see Him. As the dinner progressed, she found herself forgetting her service in listening to His words. He was speaking of great and high themes; of Israel, and of Israel's coming Kingdom, of righteousness, a new kind of righteousness that had little to do with Law, but with the heart of man and with God, but what a God! A God whom He called Father.

"Your Father in Heaven, Zacchæus, who loves you as you do your boy here."

The mother glanced at her boy. Something had come to her boy, too. Of late she had been troubled about her boy. He was a lonely soul, with none in the town save with the sons of outcasts could he make friends, and these he despised. The Rabbi's school was denied him, but she herself had taught him, as a little child, all she could of the great literature of her people, the great history, the poetry, the mystic messages of the mighty Prophets. The boy knew them all and carried an embittered heart that from all this glorious heritage he

was now outcast forever. Now the stranger had got him by the heart. A new look was in the boy's eyes, a look of wonder and of worship. The hardness, the recklessness, the bitterness had clean dropped out of the boy's face, and something fine and noble had taken their place. With throbbing heart the mother gazed at her boy, listening the while to the matchless music of the Prophet's words. What magic had this young stranger? Again she glanced at her husband. She hardly recognised him. He was all new. In his hard, cunning, cruel face which she had come to fear and hate, there shone a new light of tenderness, of humility, of sincerity, such as she remembered in him when she knew him first as a youth. As she watched and listened she found her own heart warm with a strange yearning toward this young Prophet, and often as in her service she went forth from the presence of the others she found her cheeks wet with tears of love and joy.

Oh, what a day it was! What mystic power was this which this wonderful youth exercised over their hearts! He had given her a new husband, honest, humble, tender-hearted, and

a new son reverent, gentle, eager in his response to the noble appeal in the personality of this holy Prophet. And as for herself, in the new gratitude and love of her heart for Him who had done all this for her she had clean forgotten that she was the wife of a poor man. For she, too, had entered into the heritage of the people of God.

What a day it is for all the family when Jesus comes home to dinner!

VI

GOD AND GOOD MANNERS

GOD AND GOOD MANNERS

In much of the literature dealing with the character and life of Jesus He is set forth in somewhat sombre colours. From this literature we would be justified in thinking of Him as a grave, sad-faced, middle-aged man, for whom the lighter and brighter side of human life had but slight attraction.

It has been said that there is no record of a smile on the face of Jesus. But while it is true that during His life Jesus dealt with the most serious subjects that can concern the thought of man, and that He carried burdens of responsibility and sorrow that none have ever carried, a careful reading of His life's story gives ground for the belief that He was a young man of joyous nature, keenly alive to the beauties of the world in which He lived, vividly interested in every phase of human life, the bright as well as the dark, that He never withdrew from the happy enjoyments of the people among whom He lived, and that He

was open to and receptive of the social delights of His friends and acquaintances.

It is not to be forgotten that He was charged with being a *bon vivant* by the serious minded of His day. He was often invited to dinner by men of high social standing, and we never hear of Him refusing an invitation. He was approachable, responsive, attractive, to the great mass of the people. It is significant that children came readily to Him. To high and low He was equally accessible, so that it is safe to assume that He was no killjoy, but that wherever He went His presence brought an added zest to life. The pathetic tragedy which closed His life did doubtless cast a sombre hue over His whole life story in the minds of those who recorded it, but a careful study of the incidents and teachings of the life of Jesus will support the idea that He was a young man who carried a buoyant and joyous heart, and whose face reflected the heart within him.

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In the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel there is a group of teachings of Jesus suggested by the incidents in connection with

a dinner given by one of the social magnates of the town. These incidents gave rise to three important and significant teachings of His. The dinner incidents are handled by Luke with a light touch. They furnish illustrations of the rare, ironic humour of Jesus. The incidents are the healing of the dropsical man, the amusing ill-luck which befalls some social climbers in their unseemly scramble for place at the table, the searching criticism of the social principle upon which the host of the day had made up his dinner list. Then follows, in response to a pious platitude of one of the guests, a parable in which in graver mood Jesus sets forth certain profound teachings in regard to the Kingdom of Heaven, conceived under the figure of a great Feast. Jesus, while following His invariable custom, draws His teachings from the happenings of the hour, and while ostensibly offering hints as to the conditions necessary to a successful dinner party, takes occasion to set forth certain eternal principles which are essential to right living, in every age and among every people.

I. First, from the incident of the healing of the dropsical man He lays down as a condi-

tion essential to a successful dinner that the surroundings must be in harmony with the spirit of the festal occasion. In other words, a successful dinner demands:

Right Environment

The host on this occasion is a gentleman who belongs to the sect of the Pharisees, which assures his religious standing, and is besides a ruler in the synagogue, which guarantees his official status. What was the underlying motive in the mind of this distinguished gentleman in inviting Jesus to dinner is not quite clear, but it is evident that with both host and his friends there is a lack of that fine courtesy that is ever characteristic of the sincere and gentle heart.

In the house appears a man afflicted with dropsy. He is not one of the dinner guests, but either in accordance with the free and easy customs of the Orient he has strayed in to see and hear what is doing, or, as seems likely, he has been brought in to play a part in the plot laid by host and guests to involve the guest of honour in an embarrassing situation. The sick

man is placed directly opposite to where Jesus is sitting at the dinner table, so that He can not fail to attract the young Prophet's attention.

Everything being thus staged, the whole company watch eagerly for the *dénouement* of the plot. Rumours of the Prophet's indifference to religious convention and tradition have been flying through the country. Here is a chance to prove for themselves the truth of these rumours. It is the Sabbath Day, the young Prophet's eagerness to heal the sick is well known, a sick man makes an irresistible appeal to Him. Will this disposition of His lead Him to commit the unforgivable sin of breaking the traditional law of the Sabbath?

They have not long to wait. No sooner have His eyes fallen on the sick man before Him than Jesus sees at once the trap. Will He follow His usual custom and heal the man and thereby offend the keenest sensibilities of His host, and outrage the deepest religious feelings of the whole company? There is no hesitation with Jesus. "He took hold of the man, cured him and sent him off."

There is something splendidly exhilarating

about the courage of Jesus. He finds Himself suddenly faced with what He conceives to be a duty, the performance of which will bring upon Him the contempt of those whose favour He is anxious to win. Regardless of the consequences He immediately obeys the promptings of His heart and does the thing He feels to be right. It is the only course open to Him. It is the only course open to any loyal follower of His to-day.

Having sent the man about his business Jesus proceeds to defend His act. The conflict here between Jesus and His critics is absolute, admitting of neither compromise nor composition. The principle which He lays down is fundamental, reaching to the very meaning and purpose of religion, and attacking the very foundation of their whole religious system. With many of them, leaders and people alike, religion is a matter of observance of certain laws and conventions which express for them the mind and will of Jehovah. The religious man is he who in his daily life practises unbroken fidelity to the letter of these laws, no matter how it traverses their spirit and intention. These, of course,

Jesus in His whole teaching convicts of hypocrisy and shallow artificialism. But even the more spiritually developed among them, who might escape the charge of hypocrisy and artificialism, who are not mere externalists in their attitude to the Law, find themselves challenged by the conception of God and of man which Jesus presents in His teaching and in His very personality.

To Jesus, God is a Heavenly Father, man is a brother. To Jesus religion is Love. The religious man is he who loves God and loves his fellowman. The Institution justifies itself only as it expresses Love, and is honoured only in so far as it is made a medium for the expressing of Love. With these religious men, the Sabbath, for instance, is a Holy Institution, which at all costs must be preserved by strict regulations as to its observance. To Jesus the religious value of the Sabbath lies in the fact that it furnishes a medium for the expressing of Love, God's love and man's. He who uses the day for acts of loving reverence toward God, and of loving service toward man, best preserves its religious character. With them it is the Institution which is of

supreme importance, with Jesus the one thing of supreme value in God's world is man. Hence in Jesus' view of religion mercy must take precedence over the Institution, no matter how sacred, how reinforced by Law and tradition.

Thus, inasmuch as dinner is an occasion for social enjoyment, and as therefore it is essential that the environment be harmonious with the purpose of the gathering, Jesus finds it impossible to proceed with dinner while this wretched creature remains here suffering before Him. No matter how fine the feasting, with that sick man sitting there, there can be no joyousness in the occasion for Jesus. With the Pharisee, and with his guests the presence of a sick man was a commonplace, an inevitable commonplace, with which they were not especially concerned. With Jesus, the presence of the sick man introduces a jarring note into the harmonies of the hour, and all the more because He is conscious of the power to make that sick man well.

The normal life of Jesus forbids the continuance of sickness or disease or sorrow in His presence. It would therefore be an out-

rage upon His nature, and a negation of the essential purpose of His mission to proceed to enjoy this feast in the presence of a suffering man, who could be relieved by an act of mercy. A religion which substitutes its formularies, its ritual, its conventions, for deeds of mercy is a religion to which the mind and spirit of Jesus is opposed. A religion whose practice is consistent with the neglect of the health or well-being of humanity is a religion which whatever its claims or professions may be, does not interpret Jesus to the world.

The Christian Church which is the Body of Christ, justifies its right to its name by functioning Christ in the world. It functions Christ by continuing among men the activities which characterised Christ during His life on earth, and of these the primary and the more obvious were His wonderful works of mercy toward the sick and debilitated.

Throughout all its history the Church has recognised as a primary and fundamental method of witnessing to its Lord, the ministry of mercy, which even in its darkest hours it has never quite neglected. Indeed in those dark ages of superstition when the life blood

of the church ran sluggish through her formularies and rituals, the faith of men and her own vitality were nourished by the reactions from her ministry to the poor, the sick, the homeless.

There is nothing in the world to-day that sets forth more truly and vividly the Spirit of Jesus than the ministry of mercy carried on in His name throughout the world. The Church that bears the name of Jesus, functions Jesus in the world and keeps the world in vivid memory of Him through its wide and far-reaching activities of mercy toward the sick and suffering.

A church unmoved in the presence of human misery from whatever cause, which can occupy itself with so-called religious services, no matter how splendid, how artistic, how effective, is not a church which can justify either to God or to man its claim to be called a church of the compassionate Christ. A comfortable, wealthy congregation equipped with all that is necessary to beautiful forms of worship, to splendid ceremonial, to intellectual presentation of religious truth, in the heart of a slum-infested city, by whose miseries and sins it is undisturbed is a congregation which must

offer to the great Head of the Church a sad and disappointing spectacle, and which to the world must cruelly misinterpret Him who demonstrated His claim to Messiahship by pointing to His day's work, "Go and tell what you have seen, the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised." This is the final apologetic for our Holy Faith. It proves itself in a ministry of mercy. Without this apologetic all other will be in vain, with this apologetic the solution of the intellectual problems of religion will become comparatively easy.

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Immediately following this incident of healing, the attention of Jesus is attracted by something which touches His sense of humour, and draws from Him one of the very rare ironic expressions which are attributed to Him. Himself occupying the place of honour at the table He notes how one guest after another, upon arriving, chooses the most honoured place which his courage will allow him to select. Here a guest of somewhat modest station comes in and takes his seat midway down the side. Another of like mod-

est station hesitates, and finally his courage hardly equalling his desire, he selects a place next below the guest already seated. Soon, however, a guest of some distinction arrives. He is a Pharisee sumptuously apparelled, who proceeds at once to the highest unoccupied place, namely, that next to the seat of honour. Following him, arrive two guests, obviously men of social standing, the banker of the town, a little man whose pomposity is in inverse ratio to his size, and the leading merchant of the town. With some hesitation the banker moves, with such massive dignity as he can achieve, to secure the highest seat left vacant, that next to the sumptuously apparelled Pharisee. His friend, however, noting this move of his, cleverly slips in, secures the seat for himself, and leaves the banker to take the seat below him, to the unfeigned delight of the whole company. Thus one after another the guests continue to arrive, and select such seats as are available for them. Last, in company with the host, appears a guest who by his haughty bearing obviously considers himself as worthy of the best. He is a synagogue official, a chief Ruler. For a

moment they stand surveying the table. All the high seats are taken, the Pharisee stands haughtily indifferent. The embarrassment is not his but his host's. But the host is equal to the occasion. His eye falls upon the sumptuously attired one sitting next the guest of honour.

"Ah, Nathan!" he says to the Pharisee, after an appraising glance along the line of guests, "will you give your place to Eliakim here, my honoured guest?"

Crimson with shame and rage the unhappy social climber rises from his place and begins to search hurriedly and vainly for a place suitable to his dignity. His host comes to his relief.

"Let me see," he says, indicating the pompous little banker, "take the place of Amram here." And Amram, in turn, rises shame-stricken from his place and begins to search for a seat for himself.

"Here is a place, Amram," comes a voice from the very foot of the table.

Covered with confusion, Amram hastens to the place left vacant at the foot, amid the amused glances of his fellow guests.

"Ah!" says Jesus, with a quiet and gently ironic smile. "If a man really wants to climb he ought to begin in the very lowest place, lest he may be forced to climb down."

II. Here Jesus emphasises a second condition essential to the success of a dinner party, namely:

A Right Relation Among the Guests

"Love seeketh not her own, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly," wrote, some years later, the truest interpreter of the mind of Jesus the Church has ever had.

It is not by accident that the two words "Manners" and "Morals" are from the same root. Good manners and good morals are in essence the same thing. No man out of a truly loving heart ever did an unmannerly thing. It is the gentle heart that makes the gentleman, and here the greatest Gentleman the world has known puts His finger upon the root of all vulgarity. The social climber is essentially an ill-mannered person, in that he is self-centred, and the self-centred person can never be considerate of others, that is, can never be truly courteous.

That a dinner party may be an occasion of unrestrained joy, there must be established among the guests a basis of mutual interest and social equality. They have come together upon the tacit understanding that they are to unite in promoting a spirit of good fellowship, and to this end each is to find his highest joy in giving of his best. That a guest should use any social gathering solely or mainly for his own advantage or glorification or pleasure, is contrary to the spirit of the gathering and fatal to its success.

The spirit of the self-centred soul is repugnant to the Spirit of Jesus. No characteristic of Jesus is more outstanding than His self-effacement. For Himself He sought nothing. His supreme interest lay, not in His own good, but in the good of others. The very purpose in His coming was a giving purpose. To give light to blind eyes, deliverance to captives, to give joy and peace to sad and troubled souls, to give love without limit, to give life and life abundant. For Himself He asked nothing, sought nothing but that men should give Him trust and love.

Not once nor twice did the Master seek to

instil this principle into the hearts of His disciple band, but over and over again, in season, out of season, He brought the full weight of precept and example to bear upon them that He might eradicate from their hearts the innate and thoroughly human element of self-seeking ambition. As they followed Him over the roads of Galilee often He could hear them in eager, sometimes angry discussion behind Him.

"What were you discussing so eagerly?" He once asked, and to their shame-stricken silence He made reply by setting a little child among them saying: "If any man desire to be first, let him be last of all, servant of all."

The self in them died hard, however. "Lo, we have left all," says Peter one day. "What shall we have?"

Sadly He makes reply, "A hundredfold of what you have left," adding the significant phrase, "with persecution."

Once their ambition for high place in the coming Kingdom nearly wrecked the band. Two of them, urged by their mother, and who should know so well their fitness for the very highest place, sought privately from Him a

preference over all others. The others hearing of this bit of sharp practice were indignant. It was a serious crisis in the life of the little band. Jesus called them quietly to Him and said.

"You know that among the pagans their great ones are they that exercise authority among them, but among you it shall not be so. Whosoever wishes to be great among you let him be your servant. Yes, servant of all." Then He added the solemn and pathetic words: "For even the Son of Man came not to receive service, but to give service. Yes, to give His very life a ransom for all."

But in spite of all He could do or say, this spirit of self-seeking haunted the band till the very close of their life with Him. Their very last night together was marred by an outbreak of this proud self-seeking ambitious spirit. Throughout their last day's journey after Him, they had discussed once more with increased intensity and bitterness the old eternal question, "Who is to be chief minister in the coming Kingdom?" They crowd angrily, sulkily into the guest room. There stand the pitcher and basin for the foot washing, which

was the work of the lowest servant in a household, but which comrades might easily do for one another. But who will begin?

"Not I," said Peter to himself.

"They can't expect me, the favourite to begin," said John.

Not one will move to begin the humble task. Rather will they sit to supper with hot, dusty, unwashed feet.

Then Jesus took up the task, and amid the heart-stricken silence goes from one to the other till He had done them all. Then with gentle loving sadness, knowing what was waiting them and Him, he says: "You see what I have done to you? You ought to wash one another's feet." That poignant act and word and the cross that followed cured them. Never again do we catch the selfish note of personal ambition among them.

The members of the early church excited the wonder and admiration of even their foes by the self-effacing love which bound them together, by their brotherly spirit of fellowship. And rightly so. None of the lovely virtues in human nature is so fascinatingly attractive to the heartless, self-seeking worldling as un-

selfishness. Nothing so rebukes the vulgar and brutalising spirit of the social climber as seeing among a group of Christian folk the beautiful self-forgetting courtesy which they have learned of Christ. A church filled with such Christians would soon draw men to Him.

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A third circumstance arrested the attention of the young Prophet as the dinner proceeded. From the appearance and conversation of those about the table it was easy to see that the guests were all of one social class, the class of the host, his friends, kinsmen and acquaintances. As an expression of genuine hospitality He could easily see and feel the artificiality of it all. Hospitality was a virtue among them all, a great virtue indeed, the practice of which would be well-pleasing to God, and could not fail to count as merit. These people about Him were all for laying up merit by the practice of virtuous acts. Then how futile was this dinner! What was there of hospitality in it? It was all too obviously *a duty* affair to make any claim to virtue of any sort. This host of His was simply going through the performance of an

act of hospitality in order to win merit, and in a manner least costly to himself. The farcical nature of the whole thing again woke the ironic criticism of Jesus. And while He pointed out the futility of the action of His host, He at the same time enunciated one of His most profound teachings, in laying down a third condition of a successful feast, namely:

III. Right Motive in the Host

"When you propose to show hospitality," says Jesus, "take care that your motive is in harmony with the spirit of your action. The purpose in giving a dinner is to give pleasure to your guests, the motive, that of genuine and loving interest in those whom you invite to your home, a desire to provide for them an hour of delightful fellowship. Why then ask people like these to this *duty* function? Your dinner they do not need, they have no desire for one another's fellowship, nor for yours; and you have no interest or delight in their company. This dinner is a mere social investment. Why don't you ask people to whom the dinner will bring gladness and satisfac-

tion? The poor and wretched and unhappy folk who have so little pleasure in their lives. That would indeed be a genuine exercise of the virtue of hospitality, with only such rewards attached to it as God Himself can give."

It is difficult for the modern mind moulded in its ethics by the high altruism of the Christian teaching of nearly twenty centuries to get back to the atmosphere of that dinner party. Most, if not all of them, were religious devotees themselves and keenly alive to the value of religion as a means of winning favour with God. That indeed was one of the damning taints in their religion, and consequently in their ethics. Men won and kept the favour of God by their devotion to Him. Virtue was rewarded by the favour of God. True, the idea that the Divine favour would be expressed in material prosperity and temporal delights was regarded by the more spiritually minded as unworthy and out of date. But the idea of God's favour as a reward of well-doing was firmly fixed in their thinking. It is hardly surprising that out of this commercialised notion of virtue, there should grow up

the crude and irreligious notion that a man might, by a bit of clever mental and ethical gymnastic in the practice of virtue, not only win the favour of God, but might also gain merit from men as well, and that without cost to himself.

To the pure loving heart of Jesus how repellent this chaffering spirit must have been! How remote from the mind and spirit of the Heavenly Father, whom He sought to reveal to these people was this degrading and immoral system of ethics! And what a terrible misrepresentation of the God whom they sought to worship and serve.

As He uttered this simple and heart-penetrating truth a startled silence fell upon them. It was all so new, so revolutionary to them. At their host and at one another they looked amazed.

"No! when you give your next dinner, don't ask Nathan here or Amram," said Jesus, smiling gently. "They will pay you in kind, and you will lose the reward you are after. No, ask Lazarus out at the door yonder, and the poor folk, the unhappy creatures who haunt the city gates, ask them. Think what a happy

time you will give them! Of course they cannot repay you, but think how they will love you, and God will love you too, not because of what you have done, but because of what you show yourself to be."

A very slight knowledge of modern social life reveals the fact that commercialised virtue is still not unknown in the world, and that where it is found in the heart of man, or in social life it is the deadly foe of all sincerity and all that is beautiful in human intercourse.

It is not the deliberate heartlessness of vice, but the calculated scheming of a self-seeking virtue that drives men away from goodness, and prevents their return to God. The human heart, however degraded it may become, is touched by love, craves for human fellowship as a starving man for bread, a lost man in the Sahara sands for water. The poor, the unhappy, the friendless, the lost are dying for not food though starving, not for clothing though naked, not for shelter though homeless, but for human love, for human fellowship, in other words for the rare and noble and Christly virtue of hospitality. He is Christ's apostle on earth who takes the wayfarers of

life home and warms their heart's blood, not with food and drink alone, but with the good cheer, the new life of love and fellowship of one of his own kind. They shall stand at His right hand one day who are simply kind, humanly kind, divinely kind to God's lost children, and for the love of Christ give cups of water to souls dying of thirst.

The Church of Christ must practise the virtue of hospitality, as Christ understands the word, in this world whose ways are thronged with broken and worn and friendless souls, if she is to be true to her Lord and Master, and if she is to continue to do His work in the world. Bargaining with her treasures will not do. Investing her priceless wealth in, say, hospitality in hope of deferred dividends, even of heavenly coin, means loss of all in this world and in the next.

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IV. The Ideal Host

The startled silence which fell upon the company at this extraordinary teaching of Jesus was broken by a pious platitude of a guest complacent in his assurance of privilege

as one of God's chosen: "Blessed is the man who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," he said. A useful man he was, though not specially endowed with either tact or intelligence. His word gave to Jesus the cue for one of His most vivid, most striking, most terrible parables. "The Kingdom of God?" Ah, that is the great theme with this Prophet! All lightness in form of speech, all humorous irony is gone. There is a sudden intensity of passionate feeling in the voice of this young Prophet.

The Kingdom of God! All that has passed at the dinner table is gathered up and made to reinforce the teaching of this new parable. The parable is one of strong contrasts, of daring similes. The general theme is still that of feasting, of hosts, of guests. The modern mind, unfamiliar with Oriental customs, and point of view, will find it difficult to get the full impact of some of the more important points in the story.

The framework of the parable is very simple. A man of genial and hospitable heart would make a feast for his friends and neighbours. Invitations are sent out weeks ahead

and accepted. Elaborate preparations are made for a splendid affair. The Feast day arrives, the last call is made to the invited guests: "Come! all things are ready." The generous-hearted host is waiting for his friends in happy anticipation of an hour of social delight.

The servants come back with an amazing, a stunning report. The expected guests, pledged to him for some days, one and all decline to keep their engagements upon insultingly trivial excuses. To the Oriental mind, in the action of these invited guests, the summit of rude and heartless insolence is achieved. In fact, never in the experience of one of them had such an unspeakable insult been offered to a host.

From this point the action of the parable is swift, the emotion intense. Rage fills the heart of the outraged, insulted host. Short, sharp orders ring forth to the servants: "Quick! Quick! To the streets and lanes of the city! Sweep in all you find to my feast! The beggars and tramps! Fill up the house!" The movement is breathless in its swift intensity.

"It is done! But still there is room!"

"Out! To the hedges and highways! Bring in the outcasts, the wasters, the thieves! This table must be full! A feast we must have though those friends and neighbours of mine have turned me down. They want neither me nor my dinner. But guests we shall have, guests who will love to share this feast with me, guests whom I shall rejoice to welcome to my friendship and my feast."

The parable is a terrific indictment of this nation, whose religious leaders are before Him, and is a solemn prophetic declaration of their terrible fate, because of their wilful, their insolent disregard of God and His Feast. They are God's privileged and peculiar people. For them through the centuries He has been preparing a great Feast. This very Kingdom, so long foretold by their prophets, this Kingdom toward which their hopes have yearned during these long years, this is the Feast which God has prepared, of which they are the invited and privileged guests. Jesus himself is the Servant with the last glad announcement: "Come! all things are ready."

Indifferent to God and indifferent to His

Feast, they, preoccupied with the petty trivialities of life, deprive themselves by their own act, by their mad folly, by their foolish rejection, of this wonderful thing, which for ages God has been preparing for His people.

Over against the appalling folly and wickedness of these guests, their callous indifference to the Feast and host alike, there stands in contrast the generous heart of the host and his yearning to share his best with his friends, his passionate desire for guests for his feast. With a daring characteristic of Jesus He pictures God as in a passion of indignation against those who have treated Him so scurvily. They cannot fail to catch the full weight of this passionate, throbbing, terrible parable. He is speaking of Israel, and of Israel's God. He is sketching—and bringing the sketch down to present day—Israel's story in relation to God. The words of the complacent platitudinarian perfectly represent their state of mind about themselves, and the Kingdom of God as they visualise it all. The glorious national revival symbolised under the phrase the Kingdom of God is imminent, and naturally, inevitably they will all find them-

selves in place in that Kingdom, high in God's favour, holding positions of honour and distinction and power, administering world empire over inferior peoples. Blessed, fortunate indeed they all will be. With a few swift crashing blows the dream castle is shattered by this Prophet.

There is a Kingdom of God, splendidly, joyously glorious, just like a Feast. Its coming is imminent. Israel is indeed in the position of privileged guests. For them God has made His preparations, yearning to give them His best, longing to receive their love, their fellowship. Through the long centuries He has been preparing for them, and through the long centuries they have been pledged to Him. But now that the time of announcement has come, and the day of the Feast has arrived, the unspeakable thing has happened. Israel has turned God down, coolly, cruelly with light excuses, has slapped Him in the face. Horrible! Terrible! Yet true! Absorbed in the trivial engagements of daily life as children with new toys they have done this thing. The truth is they care neither for God nor for His Feast. The thing pictured and pro-

claimed by this young Prophet of God, a Kingdom of Righteousness, a Kingdom of Truth, of Love, a Kingdom of world-wide allegiance to God, the God, not of Abraham great as He was, but the God of Jesus—all this has no attraction, no interest for these privileged people. God, the Father of all the nations, as against Israel's Jehovah; righteousness of the pure, clean, holy heart, as against the righteousness of Law and ritual and tradition; the universal Reign of Love over the hearts of men as against the world empire of Israel, before which proud Rome and all lesser nations shall bow, such a God and such a Kingdom have no clear meaning for them, and no interest. They have no place for all that in their scheme of life. Lightly, heedlessly, they excuse themselves to God, and with an insolence pictured in the crude, unspeakably callous spirit of the privileged guests of the parable they have gone about their puny affairs.

Then in a phrase they are dismissed, almost as insignificant from the picture. The most striking, the most thrilling teaching of the parable, however, is found in the revelation

of the heart of the host in this Feast. Into the foreground the young Prophet with easy, swift, relentless sureness of touch, under the figure of the outraged host, moves God. Here again there is a daring that exceeds the daring of the very greatest of Israel's ancient prophets. God wounded to the heart, God in a fury of indignant disappointment, God turning from His privileged and peculiar people, putting them out of His heart, God humiliated and deserted was not an unknown God to the ancient prophets. But this God of the eager heart, of the yearning heart, with His quick imperious commands, with His burning passion for guests, for any guests, even the sweepings of the streets, the outcasts of the hedgerows, to take the place of those others, the respectable, the privileged, His own ancient friends, this is a new God with whom these people are unfamiliar.

What is the explanation of all this indignation, this passion in this host for guests? The answer is in the whole story of God in His relation to man, that age-long pursuit, that enduring patience, that long-suffering love. God wants His people to be with Him for a

twofold reason. He yearns to share with them all His heart treasures, for their sakes, that so their joy may be fulfilled. And wonder of wonders, He yearns to have them with Him for His own sake. He wants them, their love, their fellowship, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am." That is a heart throb of God which will be for all the ages of eternity a mystery, which men and angels will seek to explore.

Yet that was the God revealed in Jesus. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I! Ye would not!" Hear Him through His sobs and tears. Do we know Jesus at all? Do we know His God?

To Jesus it is that the unprivileged owe their hope of a place at that Feast of God. All the sick, the maimed, the blind, all the hungry and homeless, all the friendless and unloved, they all have a warm welcome waiting them at God's Festal Board.

Yes, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, who peering down the dim ways see them all coming, fearful, timid, but all eager, yearning for food, for fellowship,

for love. And not one will find a shut door.

What a God! and what a Gospel! Is this the God, is this the Gospel the church is proclaiming to-day! It is the only God and the only Gospel Jesus knew.

VII

WOMAN—HER ART AND PART IN LIFE

WOMAN—HER ART AND PART IN LIFE

I. The Finest of All the Arts

The women of Bethany were lingering around the well in a high state of excitement. Their talk was of the Prophet of Nazareth, who it was rumoured was on His way to their town. There were conflicting opinions about Him. He was a Prophet, He was a mere charlatan; He was a despiser of the Law, He upheld the Law; He was a holy man, He was in league with demons. About two things all rumours agreed. He was idolised by the common people of the North country, and He was hated by their religious leaders. The women of Bethany were all on tiptoe to see Him. If they waited only long enough their desire would be fulfilled for the road He was travelling led by the well. Why not wait? The day was long and a Prophet was worth waiting for. While they waited they continued to discuss Him.

"They tell me He is kind to children," said a grave-faced matron.

"True, I have heard that the children run to Him," said a young girl, "and that He often takes them up in His arms, and blesses them."

"None of the Great Prophets did so."

"Ah! but they were too Great to be taken up with children," said a mother of ten.

"Only the truly great take note of little things," said the young girl in a gentle voice.

"It is truly a wise saying," said the mother of ten, "and also that only a maid's children are well brought up."

The young girl blushed vividly at the laugh that followed the remark.

"It is written, 'Out of the mouths of babes hast Thou ordained truth,' said the grave-faced matron. "I have heard too, that this Prophet is considerate of women, and that women of high degree follow in His train. We would do well to wait His coming before we pass judgment upon Him."

The young girl's eyes gleamed her gratitude as she drew near to the matron who had spoken.

"May I wait beside you, Rachael?" she whispered.

For answer the matron drew her hand within her arm.

"We shall not wait long," she said; "don't you hear the shouting? Ah, they are coming this way. They are coming to the well."

"Oh, there He is! The Prophet!" breathed the girl. "How weary He looks! and how worn!"

"He is younger than I had thought," said the matron.

Toward the open space about the well the crowd came, some going before, but the greater number following the young Prophet. The women made way for them.

"Can we have a drink?" said a young man, approaching the matron.

"Oh, yes! Here is my water pot. Drink, sir, if it please you," said the girl, eagerly lifting her water pot toward him.

With a grave obeisance the young man took the water pot and carried it to the Prophet, who had seated Himself wearily upon the curb of the well.

"May it be yours to drink of the water of life," He said to the girl as He lifted the water pot to His lips.

"The water of life!" said the girl in a low voice.

"The water of life!" replied the Prophet, "of which if a man drink he shall never thirst again."

That was the beginning. And as the water pot passed from one to another the Prophet continued to speak to the eagerly listening women of that "living water," which it was His to give to all thirsty souls, and "which should become in them a living well of water springing up to eternal life." When they had all drunk, the young man brought back to the girl the empty water pot.

"The Master is weary and needs a place of rest," he said to her.

"Oh, sir!" she cried in breathless eagerness. "Wait here but a few moments," and was gone as on the wings of the wind. Homeward she flew and burst in upon her sister, busy with household duties.

"Martha, Martha!" she cried, "He is wonderful! Oh, wonderful! And He wants a

place to rest. Shall I bid Him come to us?"

"Child, what mean you? Who is wonderful? Do speak sense!" said her sister.

"The Prophet! The Prophet of Nazareth! He wants a place to rest. Oh, let me run and ask Him! They are all so weary. There is a band of men with Him. Oh, let me run, Martha."

It took but a few moments for the practical and efficient Martha to grasp the situation.

"Run," she said, "and tell the Prophet I shall be honoured to have Him enter my house and rest a while, and dine. But do not hasten back, child, for there is much that I shall need to prepare. A dozen men or so, I suppose. And all hungry, I venture to say. Go, child!"

But already Mary was off, her toes barely touching earth as she sped, exultant, on her errand. She found the company still at the well, listening with rapt faces to the words of the Prophet, still discoursing of "the water of life."

The young man who saw her returning came to her.

"Oh, sir," she said breathless, not with running, but with the tide of emotion that flooded

her heart, "my sister bade me tell Him she will be honoured to welcome Him to her house—to welcome you all."

"There are twelve of us who make up His company," said the young man doubtfully.

"Oh, bring them all. We have abundant room for all," cried the girl. "But do not interrupt Him, His words are as music to my soul. I love to listen to Him."

"And He to speak His message. Look at Him! He is no longer tired."

"Wonderful!" breathed the girl, her eyes upon the Prophet. "He looks all rested, as if from a night's sleep."

"Yes, this is meat and drink to Him. Let Him but find those who will give Him hearing, and hunger, thirst, weariness are all forgotten."

"Wonderful!" again said the girl, her whole soul in her eyes, as she leaned forward to drink in the music of those clear tones that rose and fell in modulated cadence upon the ears of the people.

In a pause of His speaking, a slight disturbance rose upon the outskirts of the crowd.

"Hush! Hush!" said the people impatiently.

"What is it?" asked the Prophet. There was no answer for some moments. Then a woman, poorly clad, carrying a babe in her arms, pushed through the crowd, hobbling on lame feet toward the Prophet.

"Oh, Master! Master!" she cried in a timid, pitiful voice, "have mercy upon me and help me."

"What would you that I should do to you?" He asked. "You are lame?" He added, noting her halting walk.

"No, no, Master, it is not for my poor lame feet," she cried, falling on her knees, and lifting high her babe, "my babe is blind. But if you can help us—" her voice broke in sobs.

The Prophet took her babe in His arms, touched the sightless eyes with His fingers, and laid His hand in blessing upon the little head.

"Look," He said, "your babe sees."

The woman leaped to her feet, gazed in fear and wonder at the open eyes of her babe lying still in the Prophet's arms.

"She sees! She sees!" she whispered, lifting

high her clasped hands in an ecstasy of wonder. Then she fell in the dust before the Prophet and there pressing her kisses upon His feet sobbed forth her gratitude.

"Woman, rise!" said the Prophet.

She stood before Him.

"You are lame?" He said.

"What matters that?" she cried. "My babe sees."

"Be healed yourself. Take your babe and go away to your home."

The woman took her babe, walked a few steps away, came back running to the Prophet.

"The God of Abraham bless Thee and keep Thee and cause His face to shine upon Thee. Bless His Holy Name! I am healed and my babe sees! Blessed be the God of Israel! Jehovah has indeed visited His people."

Whereupon a tumult arose. The women crowded around the mother, taking her babe from her, passing it from one to another, while on every side rose loud shouts in praise of Jehovah, and of His Prophet.

"He will come now," said the young man. "Lead on, we will follow you."

At the door they found Martha waiting to

welcome the Prophet and His band. There was no trace in her calm dignity of the strenuous hour and a half she had spent in preparing for her distinguished guest. Waiting them were pitchers of cool water, basins and towels for their feet, with a servant to wait upon them. There were couches for them to rest upon before dinner should be served. Flowers decorated the table and garnished the walls of the room. Everything was in place and in perfect order. Martha's reputation as a forehanded housekeeper would suffer nothing in Bethany for the manner in which she had met the sudden and serious emergency of thirteen men unexpectedly arriving for dinner.

But Martha's calm bearing was no indication of her state of mind. She was indeed greatly perturbed. Her chief waiting maid had met with a mishap in the very midst of the dinner preparations.

"And here we are, two of us to serve this dinner to those thirteen men and all Bethany to see how we do it. We shall need to be at our very best to-day, Mary," she said, bustling about her fire.

But Mary whose quick eyes had taken in the

dinner preparations, stood in dismay at the elaborate scale of the arrangements for the meal.

"Martha, you are preparing for a grand dinner. Do you not think that a simple dinner is what we want to-day?"

"A grand dinner? Why not? Is He not a great Prophet? The whole town is talking about Him."

"He is a great Prophet, but He cares not for grand dinners."

"How do you know?"

Then Mary, as they both busied themselves with the final touches which are the important touches, as all good housekeepers know, with a dinner, described to her the scenes at the well. She told her of the wonderful preaching, of the word of the young man about His Master, of the healing of the woman and her babe.

"All the more reason we should give Him our very best, and our best is not too good for Him," said Martha with emphasis.

"But He cares not what He eats. He is chiefly anxious for an opportunity to give the people His message. There will be many about the doors and windows to listen."

"And all the more reason that the dinner should be worthy of Him. Would I shame this house by setting before Him a simple meal such as any house might offer."

In vain Mary pleaded with her sister to be content with less elaboration, with fewer courses. Martha had planned for a grand dinner, worthy of her Guest, worthy of her house, and worthy of her own reputation.

"It is a waste of His time, and of our great opportunity to hear Him expound His wonderful new doctrine," urged Mary, with all the earnestness of her soul. "And both new and wonderful it is, Martha. If you had only heard Him, Martha, you would know that He would care nothing for all this elaboration."

"Cease talking, Mary," said Martha, who was fast losing patience with her sister. "I know men, and they love a good dinner."

"But not this Man, this holy Man."

"Holy men are like other men at dinner," snapped Martha. "What has come to you today that you set yourself above me and your opinion above mine?"

"Oh, no, no, Martha! It is only that I have

heard Him speak," said her sister, tears in her voice.

"That is enough," said Martha. "All is ready but the serving. And we must not fail in that. A good dinner may easily be spoiled by poor serving, and that I cannot have. So let there be no failure now." Martha's voice and manner were such as to end all further discussion, and dinner was announced.

Smoothly and without a hitch went the service. Martha was in her best form, the men were doing full credit to her dinner, and as course succeeded course Martha felt herself increasingly justified in her own opinion of what was fitting to the great occasion. But her sister noted that the Prophet's needs were soon satisfied and that He was giving little heed to the dishes placed before Him.

"Can we not let the other courses go now, Martha?" she said after the dinner was well advanced. "The Master is satisfied."

"His men are evidently enjoying their dishes," said Martha sharply. "Come! On with the next course!"

"The Master refused the last course," said her sister. "And He is beginning to talk. He

wants to talk to all these people. Oh, Martha! He will soon be on His way again, and we shall miss our chance to hear him. Oh! do let this course suffice."

"What, and leave these unserved, our very finest courses, on which I have spent so much care? Are you mad? Here! Take this in!"

Grudgingly Mary took the dish and disappeared into the guest room. Some minutes elapsed, but no Mary made appearance. Martha, looking in upon the guests observed to her dismay and indignation that Mary had calmly seated herself at the Prophet's feet, and with uplifted face was eagerly listening to His talk. In wrathful desperation Martha hurried back to her task, but denied the quick and efficient help of her sister, she became flurried. In her haste she lost her steadiness of hand, her sureness of touch. Things went wrong. Dishes were slopped. The serving became confused, inept. For the first time in her life Martha was near to collapse.

Desperate she entered the guest chamber and tried to catch her sister's attention. Vain effort, Mary, serenely indifferent to all the confusion, sat fascinated, drinking in the words

that fell from the Prophet's lips. Both the Prophet and her sister had no interest whatever in her and her dinner. It was more than Martha could bear. Flushed, worried, indignant, she went straight to the Prophet's side.

"Master," she cried in a voice vibrating with petulant indignation, "don't you care at all that my sister here has left me to serve alone? Come! Bid her help me to finish my serving."

The Master paused in His speech, glanced at her flushed and worried face, understood at once the whole situation.

"Martha! Martha!" He said. "You are worried with these many courses, but the best course is this which Mary has chosen, and she must not be dragged away from it. Sit down here while I tell you about God's Great Feast, which He has prepared for us." His voice of calm command, His gentle courtesy, His deep earnestness swept Martha's soul of all petulance. In a kind of maze she sat down beside her sister and waited for the Prophet's word.

The hour which followed changed Martha's life. For in that hour she came to understand something of the Master's mind, came to know something of the great consuming passion of

His life, came to see what He desired more than all else from those who would give Him honour and service.

And this knowledge it is which in the face of conflicting duties makes clear to His loyal disciple that one finest, highest service, in the doing of which he enters into his richest and fullest experience of fellowship with his Master.

The contrast between Martha and Mary is often represented as that between the capable, managing, efficient if somewhat worldly-minded housekeeper, and the unpractical, slipshod, other-worldly idealist. Such a contrast is unpardonable and is possible only from a careless reading of the whole story of the sisters. In the first place Martha is not a worldly-minded woman. Her words to the Master on the occasion of her brother's death disclose a deeply spiritual nature, a robust faith. And in the second place, Mary is not the slipshod, unpractical girl dwelling in the clouds of idealism, and incapable of the responsibilities of the housekeeper. The difference between the sisters is one of emphasis. Both sisters were eager to offer the best they had to

the Master. Both were willing to sacrifice themselves, even to the point of suffering, that the Master might be served. But the elder sister, trained in the stern school of practical affairs, upon whose shoulders had rested the care and responsibility of the household, had come to emphasise unduly the importance of things material. Her whole experience of men, for instance, led her to the ruling conviction that the most acceptable service she could render them was to give them an excellent dinner exquisitely served. Her opinion, unhappily, was confirmed by that of most of the men she knew. She failed in this service because she failed to get the mind of this Man. With Him the feasting part of the dinner was a matter quite incidental. The simpler the meal, the better for Him. With Him the charm of the dinner lay in the opportunity for fellowship in the giving and receiving of the treasures of the spirit. As He went through life He was ever eager to give. That was His mission, to give of His finest, His richest, His best, to give, in fact, Himself. And every day He was on the alert for those who were willing to receive Him.

The younger sister rightly read His heart. We see with the eyes we bring to see. And somehow Mary knew that the finest service they could render the young Prophet in that home that day was to furnish Him an opportunity for that intimate quiet conversational instruction which is ever the best for the deep truths of the spirit. It was between the sisters a difference in emphasis. The question was which should command the life, things material or things of the spirit? There is no plea here for the unhealthy asceticism which in the interests of the spiritual would ignore completely the necessary demands of the material. Daily bread is a necessity for the spirit while it has its home in the body, but elaborate feasting has no place among the things needful to either body or spirit.

In these days woman has found for herself many new spheres of service, and in that service has shown gifts of the highest quality. In business, in the learned professions, in the leadership of great causes she has proved her powers, and has won distinction. But in spite of all the fine things she has done for the world in these spheres of service, the impressive fact

remains unchallengeable that her natural sphere is that of the Home. And for these sufficient reasons that only a woman can be a mother, and only in the Home can the children of the race be rightly born and trained. Hence of all the fine arts, the finest is given into woman's hands, the art of Homemaking. And of all the arts, not only is it the finest but also the most difficult in which to attain perfection. Money, and the skill that money can buy, can build and furnish houses, but only that fine thing that the woman brings into the house can transform it into a Home. But not all women. The Universities can make a man learned in the rules and rubrics of the poetic art, but only God can make a poet. Similarly the School of Domestic Science can make a woman into a thoroughly efficient and accomplished housekeeper, but only God can make her a Homemaker. The Home is a dwelling place informed of a spirit, a spirit in tune with the highest things of life, a spirit with an instinct for God and the things of God. The Homemaker is the woman, who to all those noble qualities that go to make the efficient housekeeper, adds that priceless quality of soul

which finds itself in sympathy with the mind of the Master, who ever seeks entrance to the homes of men that He may there find opportunity for that intimate revealing of Himself which is possible only in the Home that gives Him welcome.

The sun was far down over Olivet when the Prophet had finished His discourse to the sisters and to the company of friendly neighbours who had gathered in, after their custom, to hear and see what was going on. It had been to the Prophet an afternoon refreshing to His spirit, unbroken by the rude questioning and caviling of His enemies, which of late had so often interrupted His teaching.

His discourse over and His farewell made, He set forth again on His journey. With Him went the sisters to set Him on His way. Down the sloping hillside they went with Him to the turn of the road, from which the great City could be seen. There they bade Him farewell, and stood watching as He continued His journey along the base of Olivet. For some minutes they stood in silence, following the little company of men with their eyes, till they had reached the main road to Jerusalem.

There they saw Him part from His company and take His journey alone up Olivet's dark slopes, the others of the company disposing themselves for the night among the vineyards that clothed the mountain sides.

"Look! He is not going into the City," said Martha.

"No," said her sister, "one of them told me that He frequently spends the night alone somewhere under the trees."

"Oh, that we had offered Him shelter!" said Martha. "I cannot bear to think of Him there all the night long wearied and alone."

"He is not alone," said Mary softly, as they set out on their homeward way. "God is with Him, God will keep Him."

"Yes, truly! God is with Him," said Martha softly. "He that keepeth Israel is with Him."

At their home they found a company of their neighbours awaiting them, curious to have the last word about the Prophet, and curious too, if the truth must be known, to explore the mystery of the new Martha they had seen that afternoon.

"He will be in the City by this time," said one of them, greeting the sisters.

"No," said Martha, "He sleeps upon the hillside to-night under the trees."

"But has He no friends in the City?"

"He chooses the hillside," said Mary, "for it is His custom often to spend the hours of the night in prayer."

"In prayer?" said another, "and why should a Prophet so holy need to pray?"

"It is because He is so Holy," said Mary, "that He loves to pray."

"But I would He were to-night under the shelter of my roof, where we could care for Him," said Martha, sitting herself down at the door and looking toward Olivet, over which the moon was now rising in its full splendour.

"Shall we make the house tidy?" asked Mary, beginning to clear away the debris of the dinner, which still littered the table.

"There is no hurry," said Martha. "What was it He said about the birds of the air having neither barn nor storehouse?"

The neighbours looked at her in amazement, that Martha should set herself down in the

midst of an untidy house was a thing unheard of. Besides, there were those unserved courses still standing in their bowls and on their platters. Surely the frugal mind of Martha could not suffer these to be wasted.

But Martha's eyes were upon Olivet now standing silvered in the moonlight, her mind was still occupied with the things she had heard during the afternoon. That wonderful teaching had touched her heart, had opened out to her new vistas in life, had made life seem to her a finer and more splendid thing than she had ever dreamed.

The neighbours could not solve the mystery of this new Martha. At length, with a touch of impatience, one of them ventured a question.

"What of these courses, Martha, upon which you have spent so much labor, these rich and splendid dishes upon which you have spent so much time, what shall be done with them?"

"Take them with you, neighbour," said Martha, hardly glancing at her. "How sad He looked, Mary, as He gazed over the City," she continued, still under the spell of the Prophet. "A sadder look was His than I have ever seen in human eyes."

"He carries a heavy burden," said her sister. "He thinks of Israel, it breaks His heart that they will not have Him."

At length Martha roused herself.

"These dishes," she said, addressing her neighbours, "you can divide among yourselves. I have given too much thought to these things, I fear, while He said truly there is but one thing needful."

Quietly the neighbours took their departure, carrying with them the rich and splendid dainties which Martha had prepared, but which Mary now distributed among them, for Martha had no thought for them at all.

Long after they had gone the sisters sat looking out over the moonlit panorama that spread itself in all its silver glory before their eyes. Often had this scene filled their hearts with a quiet peace and joy. But to-night their eyes wandered mostly to Olivet, for their hearts were with that wondrous Guest of theirs, who, in the brief hours which He had spent in their home, had made all things new for them. And as they pictured Him in His lonely vigil under the olives their tears mingled with their

prayers as they commended Him to His keeping who never slumbers nor sleeps.

II. The Alabaster Box—Love's Wise Folly

The Prophet was taking His way homeward to Bethany. He was weary to the point of exhaustion. For three terrible days He had met the rulers of His people in conflict, so bitter, so intense that out of it He knew there could be but one issue. Three days of heart-wracking agony He had spent in the great capital city of His beloved country, in a last effort to win His people away from their leaders, who had failed them. Hating one another with bitter hatred, against Him His foes had united their divided forces in successive attempts now to discredit Him in the eyes of the multitude, and again to compromise Him with the Government. In every attempt they had failed. From one refuge of lies to another He had driven them discomfited, shamed, bewildered. This very day He had been forced to pour out upon them the full tide of His stern denunciations of their faithlessness to the trust of Jehovah. From their shivering souls

He had torn the last rags of their hypocrisy, their sham religion, their sanctimonious pretence, their nauseating devotion to petty regulations, their parade of generosity, covering their cruel extortion and greed.

"Serpents! brood of vipers!" He had thundered over their shaking, shrinking forms. "How can you escape sentence to Gehenna?" Then in lamentations more terrible than His denunciations He had broken forth: "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! slaying the prophets, stoning those sent to you! How often would I have called your children to me as a hen calls her little chickens to the shelter of her wings! But you would not heed!" And through their appalled and terror-stricken ranks He had passed, overborne with grief, spent and done with excess of emotion.

Slowly He made His way through the crowded streets of the city and out by the Olivet road and so on toward the little town of Bethany which had given Him shelter and welcome during these days. As He wearily climbed the Bethany slope He knew He was coming home for the last time. Only one clear day more for Him with His friends on earth.

He knew it well. Already the chill mists from the Valley of Death were blowing on His face. The feast of Passover would see the final issue of His long struggle with the leaders of His people. There was only one issue possible. He knew His enemies and the quality of their hate. He was moving steadily forward into the ever-deepening shadow of death. He knew too that because of the limitation of the powers of His foes in the matter of life and death, He would be delivered to the hands of the Gentiles. The shadow of death became for Him the darker shadow of the Cross.

And yet why had this come upon Him? He had no private end to serve. The good of His people, their salvation from the bondage of a poor, empty, formal religion, devoid of hope and of power, that had been the aim of His ministry to them. To give them back in warmer, richer, nobler fulness of spiritual life, that ancient conception of God found in their own ancient writings. It was the God set forth in Abraham's story, in the life and legislation of Moses, in the songs of their poet-king, in the utterances of their great prophets, that God it was, Infinite in creative power, gracious in His

providence, holy and loving in controlling guidance, merciful in His dealings with their sins, which He strove to give them again. That ancient conception of God they had tortured and degraded into that of a petty theocratic ruler over their nation, expressing His will in laws, which dealt not only with great moral principles, but equally with the regulation of the trivial details of ceremonial observance and religious ritual. In place of this poor travesty of Jehovah, their God, He had striven to give them such a conception of God as would win them to love and trust and glad obedience, clothing that conception in the word which in human speech represented the noblest, wisest, most loving of all human relationships, the word Father. The Divine rule over them was Father rule. The God they were to fear and obey was a Father God. The attitude of their hearts toward Him should not be that of trembling, fearful devotees, bound under inexorable laws to His worship in hope of winning His favour and of averting His wrath, but that of affectionate, trustful children, whose highest delight is found in companionship with their father.

The worthy life was not that spent in painful and meticulous devotion to the keeping of laws and regulations, under inexorable sanctions of rewards and punishments. The right life, the good life, was that eagerly devoted to the understanding of and the doing of the Heavenly Father's wishes. This noble, loving, happy, comforting conception of God He sought to give them, not only in His teaching but in the life He lived. All that kindly ministry of His through the villages and towns of Galilee had been a revelation of God. That pity for the unhappy, that readiness to help the debilitated, that mercy which welcomed the outcast and sinning, that patience with the erring and wayward, all that forthgoing love of His heart toward the varied needs of humanity had been not only an expression of His own heart but also a proclaiming of God. "I and my Father are One," was His constant appeal. "The good news of God is thus being preached to the poor." In fact, "God is like me," He said. "He seeks to do you good and He desires to win your love and trust." But they would not have it.

Nor would they have His Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Their Kingdom of Heaven was a thing of geographical and racial limitations. The Kingdom He had proclaimed ignored all such limitation, embraced mankind. The Kingdom for which they hoped was a Kingdom in which Jehovah ruled by His infinite power; the Kingdom for which He had bidden them pray was a Kingdom in which men were ruled by a holy love. The glory of their Kingdom of God was largely in its material grandeur, its political magnificence; the glory of the Kingdom which He had sought to usher in lay in the unifying of all mankind in the love and service of God. That Kingdom they had neither understood nor desired. Its demands were too high, too deep, too far reaching. Thus the difference between Him and them in the conception of God, and of His Kingdom was fundamental, absolute, admitting neither compromise nor adjustment.

As He neared Bethany His step grew slow and finally halted. He was as if He had reached the limit of His strength. The band came about Him anxious, dismayed. His face

was worn with toil and lined with sorrow. He bade them go forward to Bethany while He went on alone up the hillside.

"Master, there is a supper arranged for to-night in Simon the Leper's house," they said.

"I shall be there!" He replied and turned wearily away.

The burden upon His heart which had been growing heavier with every passing day had become almost intolerable these last days. The mental, emotional and physical exhaustion, consequent upon the long and fierce struggle forced upon Him by His foes, drove Him to His only refuge, the heart of God. He needed the quiet of the silent stars, the ministry of the encircling night, He needed more the comforting, the recreating love which flowed into His soul, as He communed with His Heavenly Father.

Meantime the disciple band went on to Bethany, discussing the events of the past week. The discussion revealed sharp cleavages among them. There was an optimistic group, the spokesman of which was Simon Peter, impulsive, determined, warm-hearted Simon Peter, and with him his brother Andrew, and

that sturdy traditionalist, Matthew. There was the pessimistic group led by Judas Iscariot, the treasurer of the band, forceful, passionately patriotic, personally ambitious, unscrupulous, impatient of delay. With him Simon the Zealot would have natural affinity in his nationalistic hopes and ideals; with him also in temperament, but only in temperament, the gloomy Thomas, in spite of his desperate courage and loyalty to the Master. The third group would be led by John, the spiritual, fiery-hearted idealist, with whom would be associated such kindred spirits as the two friends, the gentle Nathanael and Philip.

When they entered the house of Martha they found they had some time to wait before the arrival of the Master. Seating themselves in the guest room they continued their discussion, the sisters, Martha and Mary, listening in the adjoining room.

"In spite of everything you have said," exclaimed Peter, "I believe the day of triumph is near, it cannot long be delayed. Ever since that triumphal entry of His I have felt certain that the day is at hand."

" 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, be-

hold thy King cometh unto thee, lowly, riding upon an ass,' " quoted Matthew.

" 'He was despised and rejected of man, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' " quoted Mary softly to her sister, in the next room.

"The crisis surely is near," said Thomas. "What form it will take I know not, but I dread it. His enemies grow in strength daily and hourly more bitter in their hatred."

"But his friends grow more enthusiastic," cried Peter. "Think of those crowds, four days ago, their wild enthusiasm. I verily thought the Day of the Kingdom had come, I only waited for His word of victory to be spoken."

"For the word He never spoke," said Judas bitterly. "He went to the temple that day, the multitude acclaiming Him. He spoke not a word. He came away, not a word. What He means I know not."

"Surely He knows His own time and His own way," said Mary to her sister.

"That was His moment for action," continued Judas. "One call to the multitude, one

shrewd blow directed against His enemies and the city would have been ours. For my part I am weary of this inaction."

"Inaction! Inaction?" repeated John sharply. "Brother, what mean you? Was it inaction when the day following He drove from the temple that trafficking horde, rulers, priests, Pharisees, who like sheep fled before Him?"

"Ah!" said Judas bitterly, "that was the moment when I was most certain that our Kingdom had come. Then I would have followed Him to the death, but again He failed to act."

"I fear this man," said Mary. "I like him not. He rings not true to His Master."

"He has the power. All acknowledge that," continued Judas. "Why does He not sweep His enemies from His path?"

"Some day they will kill Him," said Thomas, despair in his voice.

"Yes!" said Judas, "and that will be an end of everything."

"Not of everything, brother," answered John in quick retort. "Not of the Kingdom of God!"

"No! Praise be to Jehovah! No power can end that!" breathed Mary to her sister.

"The Kingdom of Israel at any rate," replied Judas with increasing bitterness.

"God forbid!" cried Peter. "But why all this gloom and doubt? Surely we have seen great things these days. Think how He drove from the temple the most powerful of His foes! Remember how one after the other He discomfited them, sweeping away their cunning questionings, the Pharisees with their questions of Law, with their demands for His authority, the Herodians with their clever trap of the tribute money."

"Ah! I trembled then, for Him," interjected Thomas. "Had He said 'No' they would have convicted Him of sedition."

"And of disloyalty to Israel," said Matthew, "had He replied 'Yes.' "

"Then came the Sadducees," continued Peter, "with their foolish question, regarding the seven times married woman. What a noble answer that was to them, 'God, a God of the living!' Ah! I had never thought of that before. No! Let us take heart! The people are ready to acclaim Him King. They will

defend Him against all possible enemies. Did you not hear them to-day shouting their hosannas?"

"But who were shouting?" inquired Thomas gloomily. "Not the Judæans, not the citizens of Jerusalem, not any people of influence and power. No, the Galileans, peasant people, the poverty stricken, the children. I watched them closely, and my heart sank as I watched them."

"What sort of coward man is this?" said Martha to her sister impatiently.

"But," continued Thomas, "if He would but lead they would follow, and others might follow them; I know I would and gladly, even to death."

"He is not a coward," whispered Mary in reply to her sister. "He lacks faith, he does not know His Master, but he is no coward."

" 'To the death!' " retorted Judas, "and how would that serve any of us? I cannot understand all His talk about 'going to death,' 'Delivered to the Gentiles.' What does that mean? And all that talk about the cross; what good can come from all that for us? Crucified! How horrible! How can a crucified man help Israel?"

"Remember He spoke also of 'rising again,'" said John quietly.

"'Rising again!'" impatiently exclaimed Judas. "Men do not rise again after crucifixion. I cannot understand these parables of His."

"Nay, brother, but He is not as other men," answered John, none too sure himself.

"I am afraid of that man," said Mary. "He is impatient and He believes not in the Prophet, nor in the Kingdom which the Prophet proclaims."

"He is a stupid man," answered her sister. "Why should He not rise from the dead? Did we not hear Him say at our brother's grave that day, 'I am the resurrection and the life!' Nay, sister, I am sure that not even death itself can hold this Man who called forth our brother from the tomb."

"No," replied Thomas, "truly He is not as other men. It is all darkness to me, we can only follow and wait."

"Yes," said John, "wait, but also watch. You remember His parable of the foolish virgins who failed in the bridal watch."

"Watch!" exclaimed Judas again, with a

fiercer impatience. "Yes! Truly! Watch! But does that mean to let things drift while we sit idly by? Surely it means keep alert, be ready for the opportunity, and then seize it and strike. That is how I would watch."

"And wait," said John, "till He gives the word."

"Oh!" cried Judas, rising from his place and walking toward the door, "Wait! Wait! Wait! That is a word I cannot abide. Wait, till the moment for action has gone. Wait! And He with all that power at His command." And with that he flung himself out of the room in a rage.

"I like him not," said Martha. "He is anxious for himself, that man."

"I am afraid of him," replied her sister. "He has no thought of his Master. He neither trusts Him nor is true to Him. But, Martha," continued Mary, "I am afraid for the Prophet too. I have watched Him closely these days. He carries death in His face, and fear as well."

"What mean you?" replied Martha hastily. "Death and fear? I see courage there and high resolve. They cannot frighten Him, not all Jerusalem."

"No! Not Jerusalem! Not all of His enemies can frighten Him!" said Mary, with a proud ring in her voice. "Yet He fears something."

"Ah!" breathed Martha, as if afraid to give it voice. "Think you He fears—He doubts His own strength?"

Her sister clutched her in an agony of fear. "Oh! That is what I dread! He is afraid of His own strength, and, Sister, He is so lonely. Not one of these men understands Him."

After the departure of Judas, Peter took up the word.

"Truly, He has power," said Peter indignantly. "Then why all this despair? For four days now we have seen Him at every point vanquishing His foes, driving them before Him, sweeping aside their foolish and cunning wiles, filling them with dismay. We know He has power. With a single wave of His hand He could sweep His enemies into destruction. Neither man nor demon can hurt Him. You remember how He stilled the waves, how He expelled the Legion? No! My brothers, again I say, the great day is at hand! The day

of Israel's triumph! The day of Israel's glory! Let us not be faint-hearted, but believing."

" 'The sons of them that afflicted Thee shall come bending unto Thee, and they that despised Thee shall come bending at the soles of Thy feet,' so says Esaias," quoted Matthew. "Did He not speak but yesterday of the Son of Man coming with His angels? Ah! Think of it! Armies of angels, like those Elisha saw."

"That is the word!" cried Peter, rising to his feet. "That is Jehovah's true word!"

"Ah!" said Martha, "He is surely right, that is the man to follow."

"Oh, Sister," answered Mary, "I do not understand, do you think that is the kind of Kingdom which He plans? That that is the kind of power upon which He depends? He so often speaks of a Kingdom of Heaven, a Kingdom of righteousness, a Kingdom of love."

"Yes, truly," replied her sister, "but surely also He spoke of armies of angels and of the destruction of His enemies. Surely He will sweep these enemies of His, these wicked men from His path."

"No! No, Sister! That He does not mean, that He cannot mean. He hates them not. He pities them, He would save them from themselves."

"But do you not believe," said Martha impatiently, "that no power can destroy Him or His Kingdom?"

"Yes, yes, truly, I do believe," replied her sister. "But, oh, when I look at His face my heart dies down. There I do not read victory, but grief unutterable and loneliness. Oh, Sister," she continued, her voice breaking into sobs, "is there no one who understands Him, is there no one to help?"

"No one?" replied Martha. "What mean you, Sister? Have you forgotten the Lord God Almighty whom He serves?"

"No, Sister, I have not forgotten, but I remember how the great prophets have been allowed to go to their death. And, oh, He carries death in His face."

"But there are many who would die for Him," replied Martha, "many here in Bethany."

"Ah, yes, many here in Bethany, but how

little they understand Him. All they can offer Him is a supper to-night."

"Yes, a supper," replied Martha in a matter-of-fact voice. "Why not a gathering of a few chosen friends together with His own band to assure Him of their sympathy, their love, their desire to help?"

But Mary was not to be comforted. "Think of it, Martha!" she sobbed, "a supper for a man with death in His face! And the flame of Jehovah's prophet burning in His eyes! And with all that a desperate loneliness. Alas! Alas! What can we do to make Him know?"

The growing intensity of the opposition which the Prophet met in the city, day after day, but especially His own gravity of manner, His daily words of warning, His admonitions to watchfulness, filled His friends with grief for Him and with a desire to bring Him some assurance of their sympathy and their devotion to His Cause. There was little they could do to aid Him. It was a new situation for them all. Never had He required aid at their hands. He had been to them a tower of strength. Upon Him they had learned to depend in every emergency. He had never

failed to show Himself abundantly equal to any demand for wisdom or power. They could not associate Him with any thought of weakness, failure, defeat or personal danger. His whole ministry had been one unbroken succession of triumphs. When, therefore, He spoke of approaching calamity, disaster, death, their minds simply refused to take in the ordinary meaning of plain speech. He had so frequently made use of parabolic or metaphoric forms of teaching that they took refuge in the thought that His words were capable of some hidden meaning which would rob them of their seemingly dreadful import. But that He was weighted with anxiety, burdened with some load of sorrow, they could not fail to see. Hence it was, that not knowing what other to do, their desire to bring Him some assurance of their sympathy, of their devotion, took the form of a gathering of His friends in the friendly fellowship of a supper.

While many houses were open to Him, it seemed not unfitting that Simon, whom He had healed of leprosy, should have the honor of entertaining Him, as it seemed also appropriate that among the guests His loved friend

Lazarus should have a place, and that Martha's efficient help should be welcomed in serving the meal. In these arrangements her sister seemed to find no place. But no place did Mary desire at that supper. No heart had she for anything in the nature of a festivity.

Inadequate as the supper might appear as a method of meeting the needs of the Prophet, He accepted the suggestion at full value, and while His need went beyond all human help, doubtless He found in the kindly fellowship of that supper gathering the healing ministry which His human heart craved. And down through the centuries, even to this day, there have been those of His disciples who have found their hearts grow warm with tender, grateful love, toward those who on that night on which He was bidding farewell to all gracious, kindly human things, home, friends, sympathy, trust, took thought to make Him a supper, and thus provide Him with the opportunity for this last kindly good-bye.

That supper hour plumbed the deep places of human emotion. Perplexed, harassed almost beyond endurance, His friends gather round Him eager, but helpless to lift from His

heart the load which so evidently lay there. The young Prophet, their spiritual leader, the centre of their hopes, the object of their devotion, sat there among them equally eager to relieve their hearts of their burdens of anxiety and perplexity, but for the first time in His experience strangely unable to bring them this relief. The failure was not His but theirs, not because of any mental incapacity in them to accept the comfort He sought to give but because of an incapacity of will to accept the truth which at the time was in conflict with their preconceptions, their ambitions, their desires. Yet notwithstanding this mutual inability to give the help so sorely needed, their mere sitting together about that table, their sharing in the common meal, the kindly speech warm with friendliness, the touch of hand on hand, the outflowing of soul through shining eyes, all these made the supper a thing not in vain.

But from all this Mary felt herself to a greater or less degree excluded. Even while she listened she felt that she could make no contribution to the flow of spiritual intercourse which it was the privilege of the men to enjoy. In and out of the room she moved, a gentle

soul, quick in her perception of the mind of the young Prophet lying in the place of honour at the table. The first to catch His thought, the readiest to respond to the call of His spirit for understanding and for sympathy, she felt herself denied the privilege of expression, of conveying to Him something of the flowing tides of passionate love and pity that filled her heart for this young Man, the Lord of her soul, the Master of her heart, the Author of her immortal hope.

To-night He had little to say to them. He had still some final words of comfort to say to them, but not to-night. Rather, as His eyes went from face to face, He seemed eager to take what they had to give. His heart was hungry for their understanding, that so He might receive what He most needed, their love. As she watched Him she read that hunger in His eyes for understanding and for love. But they could not understand because they would not, and because they failed to understand, they failed to give Him the full measure and full quality of love which He desired. Vainly He spoke of the fate awaiting Him, vainly He warned of the tragedy about to befall them,

vainly He sought to fix their hearts on the glory to follow in the after days. Their minds were closed. He gave up the attempt. Because they would not believe His simple word, not one of them could enter into the sanctuary of His sorrow. Alone He must pass into that dread place, alone He must face His last fight, alone He must suffer His last agony, alone He must pass into that last black shadow. Of all the human hearts that loved Him, and would gladly have died for Him, not one understood Him. In all the world not one to accept in utter simplicity His plain revelation of the fate awaiting Him and of the glory that would follow. Not one? Yes, one! The young girl whose soul, many months ago, had opened out to the light of His truth, as a flower to the sun. From that day onward, under the shining of that light, her soul had expanded and developed in strength, in power of appreciation, in beauty of expression. During these months she had come to know Him better. When sorrow had come to the home of the sisters, His tears had mingled with theirs. To her appeal for comfort He had re-

sponded with such a marvellous display of Divine power as to waken in her a faith in Him as Jehovah's accredited representative, so complete, so simple that His word found in her soul an immediate response. Where His special band of followers faltered, and refused to accept His announcement of the dreadful tragedy which would close His earthly career, this girl accepted His word in such complete simplicity and fulness that she was able to enter into His anticipatory emotions of fear, horror and grief. To her "death and the cross" meant "death and the cross." But far more than the simplicity and completeness of her faith, it was the purity and fulness of her love that made her understand. Love, after all, is the best teacher. It is love that makes wise to serve. On the occasion of that first evening with Him, months ago, she had given to the young Prophet, unsullied and entire, the love of her virgin heart. Her experience of Him in her sorrow, and in her joy, her growing knowledge of His Gospel as He unfolded His mission, only served to develop and intensify that love till it burned a white

flame of holy fire, consuming all of self, kindling in her one absorbing passion, the passion to give herself to Him.

This night that fire burned with a new intensity, because of the pity in her for that which waited Him. Death and the cross waited Him and she powerless to help Him, unable to let Him have the poor comfort of knowing that there was one who understood, who suffered with Him, would gladly die with Him. What could she do? In her own room, as upon her knees she sobbed out in prayer her helplessness to bring Him all she had to give, her love, her tear-filled eyes fell upon an alabaster vase upon her table. Immediately she was upon her feet. Her vase of priceless nard prepared for her bridal night! This was her bridal night! To-night she would give herself to Him! He would understand. This would carry to Him the message of her heart. This would speak for her with an eloquence denied her lips of the thing that burned like a flame within her. On winged feet she flew to the guest chamber, her vase of priceless nard fast in her hand. Swiftly she threaded her way to the Prophet's side, with trembling fingers she

broke open the fragile fastenings and poured upon His head, and then kneeling, poured upon his feet, the precious perfume, and with her flowing hair caught the erring drops, lest any should fail of their purpose.

As the fragrance of the nard filled the room the magnitude of the offering dawned upon the company. In one brief moment this priceless perfume had been lavished in a single anointing. An amazed silence held them for a few moments, then indignant mutterings, at first indistinct, rose into articulate protest. "What sense is there in this?" "What sinful waste is this?"

Judas made a swift calculation.

"This nard is worth three hundred pence. It would suffice to keep a family in life for a year!"

At once the girl was covered with confusion. Were they right, these men? She had not paused to estimate the value of the nard. Was it an act of wicked waste, after all? Had she made a foolish mistake? Were they right, these shrewd, calculating men of affairs? She heard them talk of the poor. Would it have been better to clothe the naked, to feed the

hungry with this gift? She dared not look at the Prophet. Overwhelmed with confusion, she was seeking escape from the room when a voice arrested her.

"Let the woman alone!" Firm, clear, authoritative, the voice hushed all other voices into silence. "Why wound her feelings so? It is a beautiful thing she has done to me. The finest thing and the most fitting that she could have done in that it is an anointing for my burial."

"An anointing for His burial!" Stricken into silence, the men gazed at Him, still wondering just what He meant.

"And hear what I tell you! Wherever through all the world and throughout all time my Gospel goes, with it shall go the story of this woman's beautiful deed to me."

Because it epitomises His Gospel. For this Gospel of His, this glad story of His which is to go down through all time, and go forth through all lands, is nothing more or less than the story of a love like this. For while to the men of the world, poor dead souls, the act was one of futile waste and folly, to Him it was beautiful, priceless, fragrant with a love un-

calculated, without measure, and wise, oh, so wise, for it found its way straight to His lonely heart.

As the Master spoke the girl stood held fast under the spell of His words. What He was saying she hardly knew, but He was speaking for her, championing her against these men. Ah, He understood! He knew! He loved what she had done! Her perfume had carried to His heart the message of hers. Yes! Truly she had kept this nard for her bridal night, and, ah! He knew this was her bridal night! To-night she had given herself to Him without reserve. She was content! To death He must go. Some one would be there to bury Him, but amid the aroma of the spices which they would pour over his body, would mingle the fragrance of this anointing. He would be laid in His tomb, but oh, glad and wondrous thought! His Gospel would find not a tomb but wings to reach the world's end. That her name should go with that glad message, that she hardly understood. After all that mattered little. But a living Gospel meant somehow a living Lord. Surely in that word of His

lay hope of His victory over death, of life for Him beyond the tomb.

Trembling, in an ecstasy of joy and grief, she stood a brief space, holding His eyes with her tearful eyes, taking her last farewell of Him, then passed out into the night.

Soon the company took their departure, subdued, awed and still perplexed in their slow hearts as to what that burial should mean.

But when the men had all gone their ways, the sisters, seeking comfort in each other's arms, stood watching Him go alone down the moonlit slope to the turn of the Olivet road. There their tear-laden eyes lost Him.

"Ah, He is gone!" said Martha, her voice broken with her sobbing. "We shall see Him no more!"

"Yes, He is gone! He is gone!" replied her sister Mary, her voice sweet with the quiet music of an evening bell. "But I feel it here!" She laid her hand upon her heart. "How, I know not, yet I know, He will come again. He will come again! Sister, weep not. He will come again."

And with her we say to our hearts, "He will come again." How? When? We know not,

but He will come again! He will surely come again!

Meantime it is ours to offer Him that priceless, perfect fragrance of Mary's alabaster box.

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